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Rod Serling's THE TWILIGHT ZONE

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GAHAN WILSON'S WEIRD WEEKEND

JOHN CAMERON'S 'ALIENS'



Rod Serling's THE TWILIGHT ZONE Magazine

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY LEN DE LESSIO

August 1986

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TZ IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Womanade and other wonders.

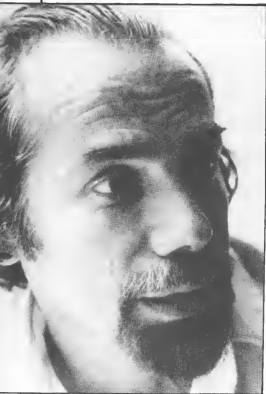
We were in the fashionable Apollo Coffee Shop, trying to come up with a summer cover. Nothing. Zip. The cheeseburgers were congealing; the coffee was growing a milk skin; there was something vaguely wrong with the lox, a fact the manager, a man from the Peloponnesus, staunchly denied. "I put it in refrigerator only a week," he insisted, skewering the logic of fresh fish.

Our expense account blown on this suspect cuisine, we sat and stared at each other numbly. Until the art director ordered lemonade. It was served on ice, with lacy.

The rest was easy. We turned her head with promises of fame and fortune, flimflammed her into signing a model release, and rushed up to the photographer's loft. She was a natural.

Here are some other phenomena.

In **Robert Silverberg's** *"Watchdogs,"* some skilled hunters pursue exotic prey. Here Silverberg delves into nature's subtle traps to set one of his own. The author's most recent novel, *Torn O'Bedlam* (Donald I. Fine), tells a tale of collective dreams, a holy fool, and a messianic cult of the future—and tells it well.



Robert Silverberg



Bruce Jay Friedman

We can't seem to keep animals out of these pages somehow. Of course, in **Bruce Jay Friedman's** "Post Time" we get more stream of consciousness than hoof and flank as our protagonist racehorse tries to puzzle out the values of the maddening crowd. Friedman, who moves easily between the satire of *A Mother's Kisses* and *Stern*, and such fantasies as the play *Steambath*, has a biting new collection of stories in paperback entitled *Let's Hear It for a Beautiful Guy* (Carroll Graf).

Chet Williamson adds "I'll Drown My Book," a story that speaks to every writer's deepest fears of exposure, to our summer mix. Williamson, whose novels *Soul Storm* and *Ash Wednesday* are due out soon from *Tor*, got his start here at *TZ*. His work has since appeared in *The New Yorker* and *Playboy*, among others. (For more on Williamson, see our interview with him in "Breaking In.")

In "Milk" we begin dealing with that most peculiar animal of all, *homo newenglandus*, as **Donald Burleson** mixes some traditional elements with primal milklust. This is the only story I know of in which a straw is an instrument of horror. Burleson, who lives in New Hampshire with his wife Mollie, also a writer, knows his territory well.

Andrew Weiner, whose stories

have been appearing with great regularity in fantasy and sf magazines this year, has, like Friedman, put us inside the mind of a troubled creature. But whereas Friedman's thoroughbred knows he is a horse in a race, the narrator of "This Year, Next Year" is having difficulty figuring out who he is—or even what the rules are. I recommend this one for readers plagued by recurrent nightmares.

Weiner's "Distant Signals," which first appeared in *TZ*, was aired as an episode of *Tales from the Darkside*.

Garry Kilworth's "Angel's Eyes" should appeal to those of you with a taste for the classic ghost story. Kilworth has evoked, with charming ease, the world of the *tut man*—the junk man of last recourse—who picks over the picked-over remains of abandoned houses and lost souls. The author lives in the English village of Ashington where, he writes, "the Vikings thrashed the English in 1015 and the Danes have the audacity to build a commemorative bonfire every five years." Kilworth's novels include *Night of Kadar* and *In Solitary*, both by Avon.



Roger Parson

Roger Parson's "In a Gray Place," an off-beat tale of a world of soft surfaces and featureless vistas, is his first published fiction. Parson, who had the good sense to give up corporate law to write fiction and play the bagpipes, is pictured above in full regalia. He is married and the proud father of an eighteen-month-old baby who refuses to sleep.

For connoisseurs of damnation, **John Shea** offers "Epiphany," a story



Barbara Owens

with an ancient theme that is utterly timeless. In "Epiphany" we get a carefully wrought Rome, an ambitious priest, a provocative reporter—and a resolution worthy of a medieval vision of darkness. Shea, who's an editor at the University of Pennsylvania's alumni magazine, has recently completed his thesis on the late—and much lamented—*New American Review*. His work has also appeared in *The Partisan Review* and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*.

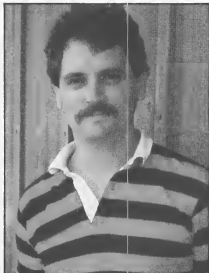
Barbara Owens's "Portrait: Edward Larabee," like Kilworth's "Angel's Eyes," is in the classic tradition of hauntings. But Owens has a number of tricks of her own, and the denouement of her story delivers the kind of payoff readers of the genre crave. Barbara Owens is the widely respected author of numerous stories,

one of which, "The Cloud Beneath the Eaves," received the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar in 1978.

Stanley Wiater, whose fascinating interview with Whitely Strieber rounds out this issue, has profiled such luminaries as Ray Bradbury and George Pal. His work has appeared in *Fantasy Review*, and *SF MovieLand*, among others. A new Wiater short story will soon appear in J. N. Williamson's *Cold Sweat: New Masters of Horror*.

Finally, we are twice blessed by Gahan Wilson here, as he not only casts his fantasy-jaundiced eye at the movies, but also takes us along on a weird Wilsonian romp through the Victorian halls of Mohonk—and fulfills a lifelong criminal dream. Take a look at "Gahan Wilson's Weird Weekend."

—MB



John Shea



Stanley Wiater

Rod Serling's THE TWILIGHT ZONE Magazine

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KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE ROAD

Dear Editor:

Richard C. Matheson mentioned in the August issue of *Twilight Zone* that he had "these ongoing fantasies while driving."

So do I...

... of a rail road crossing at two a.m. on a lonely country road. I watch oblong shadows pass across my headlights and into another dimension, while listening to the clickity clack ... clickity clack of steel. Then I wait for the darkness and my imagination to engulf me.

I did once. Boy, what an embarrassment!

—Shannon L. Story
Weatherford, Texas

Moral: When you drive, don't fantasize.

CANCELLED

Dear Editor:

I am writing in response to your renewal notice which I received recently, which urged me to continue subscribing to *Twilight Zone* Magazine. Actually, the subscription was given to me as a Christmas present, so I had little to do with it.

First, let me say that I do not intend to renew my subscription. The main reason for this decision is due to the content of the magazine. I have read many of the original *Twilight Zone* stories by Rod Serling and have found them to be incredibly stylish and original, with great twists and unexpected endings. In contrast, the bulk of the story material in your magazine has very little to do with the type of *Twilight Zone* which Rod Serling invented. Most of it is overly vulgar and/or sexual, not necessary for stories in which the main emphasis is supposed to be on suspense and intrigue. In fact, it is not only unnecessary, it is detrimental. The people who write the stories for your magazine cannot seem to grasp this idea. If you are trying to appeal to teenagers, who generally love to read about, hear about, and see sex and violence, I see your point. But if you wish to remain loyal to Rod Serling, you will cut out this unnecessary

material and try to scare and intrigue your readers, not disgust them. Perhaps you can even obtain the right to print some of Serling's original stories, too. You may not think so, but teenagers enjoy them (I am fifteen and relish them, myself.) Your magazine would sell more, you would receive more subscriptions, and as a result, you would make more money.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I certainly hope you will at least give some thought to my comments.

—Andy Schmidt
Allentown, Pennsylvania

In a world of raging Rambos and pornography-to-go, we find it strange that TZ should be singled out for being "vulgar." We're also saddened by the argument that things sexual are "disgusting."

While we see no reason to print extremely explicit sexual material—there are plenty of other magazines and videotapes for those whose tastes run in that direction—we still remember when works by James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence had to be smuggled into the United States in plain brown wrappers. That sort of censorship has long been viewed as a violation of freedom of expression by the Supreme Court, not to speak of a transgression against writers struggling to speak themselves in true and frank ways.

We hope that other young people feel as we do—that censorship is the enemy of art—best practiced by theocracies and dictatorships. Therefore, we were heartened by the letter below from Caren Diebold, but we would still like to hear more from young readers.

RENEWED

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your great magazine. I know a lot has been written to you about whether the magazine should be read by young people. I do not believe in censorship and my two teenagers and one pre-teen read TZ with my encouragement and approval. This is one magazine that should be in school libraries! People have different literary tastes, and the area of TZ is a long-time favorite of people

of all ages. Keep up the good work!

—Caren Diebold
Lakewood, Colorado

ADVENTURER

Dear Editor:

I'd like to commend TZ for including the likes of Dino Buzzati, Robely Wilson, and Julio Cortazar in its pages. These stories depart from standard horror or fantasy fare, and are sometimes a little more difficult to understand, but that's precisely why TZ should present them. Please keep up the adventurous publishing.

—Anna Ballin
Teaneck, New Jersey

Look for more out-of-this genre experiences in TZ!

GRAVING SCHOW

Dear Editor:

In the 1984/1985 issues of *Twilight Zone* magazine you ran a series of articles on the television show *Outer Limits*. The final installment was published in the February issue 1985. In the editor's column it was noted that a book would be forthcoming by the authors of the series, David J. Schow and Jeffrey Frentzen. I enjoyed the series and was looking forward to the book. But for the last several months I have not been able to find any additional information about the authors or their book. I would like to request any information you could provide concerning this book, or possibly information on how to contact the authors directly.

Mr. Schow informs us that his guide to *Outer Limits* will be out in November. Look for it in a Berkley Books edition.

If you'd like to sound off about the fiction or features in TZ, if you'd like to go into a diatribe about the fantasy field, if you're yearning to share the latest sighting of H. P. Lovecraft with kindred souls, please write to Twilight Zone Letters Department, 800 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017

Space islands, centrifugal rickshaws, and a country club of the future.

One of the testimonials on the cover of Pamela Sargent's **Venus of Dreams** (Bantam, \$3.95) predicts that it will become a classic of its kind. Assuming that we mean the same thing by classic, I would almost, but not quite, agree—for I have reservations I shall mention later. Instead, let me simply say that *Venus of Dreams* is a fine sf novel that can be enjoyed on many levels.

Although it is about 250,000 words long, there is no padding, a really unusual virtue in a work of this length. It flows smoothly and evenly, and holds the reader's attention in a world that is alien in setting, but familiar in humanity.

Venus of Dreams takes place about six hundred years from now, when the earth is controlled by a world government composed of "nomarchies" under the rule of the Moslem Mukhtars (Arabic for "governor"), although the cultural patterns that Sargent describes are essentially Western. The Mukhtar administration is a tyranny with strict computer-linked social controls, but with mild penalties for disobedience or recalcitrance.

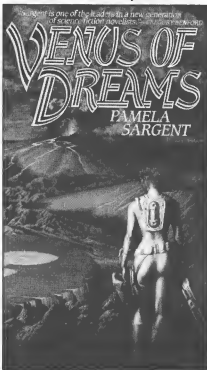
Iris Angharads, the central character, is born and reared among the Plains people near Lincoln, Nebraska. Her childhood world is a femino-centric, matriarchal, matrilinear agrarian commune, where men are not really necessary, but wander in and out for casual liaisons or occasional planned fatherhood. The Plains culture is sex-obsessed and promiscuous, with strong taboos against lasting sexual relations. Indeed, one of the women in the commune is under a social shadow because her two children were sired by the same man.

The real impetus of the future, however, is not on earth, but around Venus, which is being readied for colonization. A gigantic space umbrella shuts off the sun's rays, and Venus's surface temperature is already dropping. Space islands above Venus house workers who are preparing for the eventual landing and settlement in domed cities. Convoys carry loads of hydrogen ice to the atmosphere, and special forms of plant

life have been developed to survive under the still-torrid, poisonous conditions.

For the Mukhtars Venus is a solution to overpopulation and a step toward the survival of the race. For the workers on the space islands Venus will be a new home. And for young Iris Angharads it is a dream goal obsessively sought.

Venus is also a juncture for a



third group beyond the terrestria and would-be colonists. Not all mankind is under the control of the Mukhtars. There are also the inhabitants of the Associated Habitats, people who live mostly on artificial worlds out beyond earth. They have modified themselves physically with implanted computer linkages, and they are hated and feared by the people of earth and the space islands, especially for their group mentality and incomprehensible quietism. Yet they are necessary, for they alone have the technology and resources to finish off the Venus project. The earth is almost exhausted. These Habbars, as they are called,

are building the great domes with robotic labor and have installed gigantic pyramidal structures that during the course of the novel will cause Venus to start rotating. (A hard-science reader might raise an eyebrow here and there, but let us accept all this as author's license.)

Against this background Sargent narrates Iris's life, first as a young woman in the Plains who conceals her intelligence and her drive toward education and the Venus project. Later, she violates Plains mores by signing a twenty-year marital bond with a congenial young man who has served on a space island, breaks another bond in training school as a meteorological technician, and finally moves to an island above Venus, where she holds a higher rank than her quasi-husband and gradually grows away from him. She would be very successful in her field, were it not for job politics, for although there are others who are more brilliant, she has an intuitive comprehension of random factors that her male colleagues lack. (Feminine intuition crawling back in via the rear space hatch?)

All through Iris's triumphs and failures Sargent stresses the single theme of duty, whether it is Iris's responsibility to her own self-fulfillment, to her mother in the closely-knit Plains matriarchy, to her quasi-husband the gentle Chen, to her son, or, most of all, to the Venus project, where duty assumes an aspect reminiscent of old-fashioned patriotism. But as Iris later realizes, she does not always level the balances. She has demolished her mother; has estranged the likeable Chen; and, worst of all, her parental neglect has cost her her son, who after legally disowning her, defects to the Habbars—a shocking act. Iris is crushed, but bobs up again, following a guilt-fueled duty in new forms: self-sacrifice, and empathy.

Until now Sargent has developed Iris beautifully in terms of social and psychological realism, but now the story changes in a way that bothers me. Sargent turns her novel of human relationships into a cliffhanger and a thriller. Iris becomes a world-saver in a way reminiscent of Heinlein's "The Long Watch." She alone may be able to prevent a band of im-

patient labor agitators from blowing up the partially finished domes on the surface of Venus. She manages to minimize the destruction, but dies in the explosion. Iris is now the great Cytherean martyr, with a statue based on one of her husband's carved portraits.

Too bad. Is such a plunge into melodrama really necessary? Is a retreat into the old action tradition the only way to demonstrate that a woman can be heroic? As a parallel case, take Dickens's *Great Expectations*, which is also about selfishness. What would we think if he had placed Pip in a shoot-out with Chartists and killed him in the explosions shattering the Vauxhall filtration plant?

This departure from tone and line is the reason I cannot call *Venus of Dreams* a true classic, even though it is outstanding in many other ways. The background is detailed firmly and convincingly; characterizations are strong and vital, though perhaps more rounded

for women than for men; and a thought-provoking subtext creates tension among the various drives and motivations. Oddly enough, though the author is usually considered a feminist writer, her subtext is basically conservative. *Venus of Dreams* suggests that while women may be emancipated sexually, they are tied up in other ways that hamper and frustrate them. A woman like the sometimes bitchy Iris may have a right to selfhood, but her responsibilities to her family, the story implies, are greater still. It is praiseworthy if individuals sacrifice their lives for a project of the state, and those who protest a shafting are dangerous, evil agitators who deserve the ill fate they receive. And the height of woman's destiny can be expressed in the old saw, *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*—It is sweet and proper to die for one's country.

I do not suggest for a minute that these ideas extracted from *Venus of Dreams* are Sargent's *ideals*. I

have no knowledge of her personally, and story does not always mirror life. But I do suggest that these are among the ultimate implications of her novel. Whether they will be retained in future volumes, or whether they will be declared the warped notions of a crookedly grown society, to be redeemed by the Habbers, I won't even guess. I am simply looking forward to more of what is, with exception noted, one of the best sf novels I have read in a while.

With William John Watkins's **The Centrifugal Rickshaw Dancer** (Warner, \$2.95) we enter a world superficially similar to Sargent's *Venus of Dreams*, what with space clutter and dreams of freedom, but very different in attitudes and approaches. Whereas Sargent stresses human values and relationships in a future context, and by implication is hitting at galactic humanity, Watkins is ironically concerned with a struggle for liberty against tyranny, and his approach is calculatedly bizarre,

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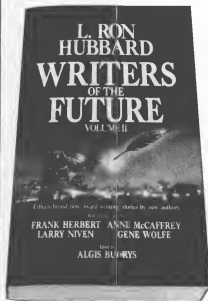
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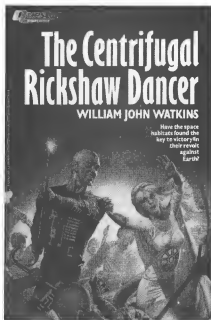
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his ideas often shocking.

The action of *The Centrifugal Rickshaw Dancer* takes place in a future far enough away for earth to be ringed with six artificial habitats and several energy satellites that keep the power-hungry, power-poor earth functioning. Over several generations the six habitats have developed cultures of their own—brutal thuggishness for Hardcore, the former space warehouse; whimsical eccentricity for Catchage; and deviousness for Grand Sphere. A common factor to all the worldlets, however, is cultural imbalance and cheapness of human life. The present problem is that the habitats are exploited by the earth-based Corporation, which is the creature of the great Spencer LeGrange, a larger-than-life wealth-hog who would make John D. Rockefeller, Sr., look like Appleseed Johnnie. One of Old Spence's tricks to keep his hard-hat police in line involves forty-foot holograms of himself.

The story is set in Grand Sphere, the interior of a globe about three miles in diameter. This is the world of the Down Side Granders, a culture of devious and cynical men and women who live by fleecing tourists, ripping off the Corporation, and swindling each other. Keeping them somewhat under control is the Fist, the Corporation police, a tough bunch of strutting cops equipped with prod rods (called canes) that can deliver lethal shocks. Guns are not allowed on Grand Sphere, for a bullet could pierce its shell and a broken Window could render the world airless. And above and beyond the lower Granders and the police are the Up Side Pleasure Crew, the third generation of the profiteers who built the habitats. An incredibly decadent bunch, they live lives of delights, splendors, and sensualities almost indescribable.

Central to Grand Sphere is the centrifugal rickshaw, a device that must be something like gigantic gyroscopes controlled by shifting one's body weight and position, somewhat like the high school physics experiment with rotating gimbals. The rickshaw is the chief means of transportation within Grand Sphere, and individual rickshaws are operated by a clique of virtuosi who have the



license and mores of New York City cabbies.

Watkins does not describe the rickshaw precisely, but it seems to be a contraption of wheels and forks, with seats for driver and passenger, both of whom must stay in balance. How it works mechanically or whether it would work at all is not important. More significant is its symbolic value. For the author it is life in the habitats, motion, coordination, the momentum of fate, and the irresistibility of the Revolution.

For the Granders the rickshaw is the nucleus around which cultural patterns crystallize. It is the focus of songs and sayings reminiscent of twentieth-century calypso music (especially that of Lord Invader). Most of these pronouncements, which are conveyed in a patois like a deep black dialect, have double and triple entendres, ranging from literal communications, sexual slurs, and insults to code messages. Actually the whole planetoid is much like a fictional Caribbean island where everyone is on the make, chiseling, outwitting, and plotting.

Also central to the culture is the pleasure principle, which is developed to an extent that would arouse the envy of an Edwardian psychoanalyst. There are special pleasures that record delights, and apparatus that can repeat extended ecstasies, as well as the

tickler, a small, pill-like dot that is placed on the forehead. Perfected by the Corporation, it creates the ultimate in addictive pleasure, and it is one of Spencer LeGrange's most potent controlling devices.

Unfortunately, there is one problem with the Corporation tickler. It must be individually fitted to a person, a long process which involves a lab full of equipment for plotting brain elements. As the tickler is not transferrable to others, there has arisen the myth of the Universal Tickler, a simple device that would fit anyone, yet be as effective as the Corporation model. On Grand Sphere the Universal Tickler has become something of a con game, shares of which are sold to visiting suckers. Yet there is the possibility that it might be developed, making its inventor a power to be reckoned with. Now the word is going around that a workable Universal Tickler is in the hands of the Revolution. Will Old Spence act?

The story line of *The Centrifugal Rickshaw Dancer* focuses on two well-drawn personalities, Uwalk Wenn and Roger Count Aerowaffen. Uwalk Wenn is the most skilled of the incredibly coordinated rickshaw men, and his primacy is recognized. He is also, in effect, a dhyana master out in space, for he takes his rickshaw and his expertise with the electric cane most holly, seeing their management as inner disciplines rather than a matter of coordination and reflexes.

Associated with Uwalk Wenn is the Dionysian Count Aerowaffen, one of the guiding minds of the revolution. A native of the jester world of Catchage, a Grandier by long residence, Aerowaffen acts as "Panda" to the Pleasure Crew. That is to say, he is a leader in their orgies and revels, for he has the imagination otherwise lacking in the culture. One of the Pleasure Crew who appreciates this is the sex and romp queen Eleganza, the delight of all the worlds.

Watkins's book, though directly political in plot, is not concerned with social dynamics. It does not analyze motivations as tugs in different directions as does Sargent's, and it is frankly simplistic and incident-concerned. Everyone agrees that the removal of the Corporation from the

(continued on page 71)

State-of-the-art cyberspace, conversations with Dick, and anthologies galore.

I've never been very fond of high-tech sf, which is often blindly worshipful of science, conservative, boring, and smug. And that is why, when William Gibson's *Neuromancer* came out a few years ago, I skipped it, even though it picked up every award in the book, and even though it was pressed on me by an author acquaintance, with missionary fervor.

Then recently *Count Zero* (Arbor House, \$15.95) appeared, and this time I took the trouble to read the first page. Reading that page, with its spectacular compression and precision, its inventive and playful use

possess a familiarity with the way things work that is breathtaking.

Count Zero takes place in a believable twenty-first century. Urban sprawl has created a megalopolis stretching from Boston to Houston (called, naturally, the Sprawl). Life is grimmer than it is today.

The story moves through three plot lines that finally converge. The first concerns a two-listed type named Turner, a mercenary for the huge corporations that virtually control governments and economies. Turner is "a specialist in the extraction of top executives and research people . . ." wresting them from the dominion of a corporation, an immensely dangerous game.

The second story line follows a former art gallery owner named Marly Krushkova who is hired by the world's richest, most powerful man, Josef Virek, to locate the obscure and elusive artist who has created an evocative piece similar to the boxes of the twentieth-century artist Joseph Cornell. Virek is kept alive by vast life support systems and only appears to his agents and employees in a simulation of reality.

The last major character is Bobby Newmark, aka Count Zero, a slum kid who deals in black market software. Testing a program one day, Bobby finds himself hooked into a fatal feedback circuit, from which he is saved at the last moment by a sort of divine intervention—a voice from nowhere.

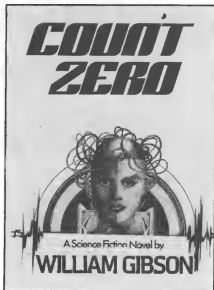
That nowhere, it turns out, is Cyberspace, a group mind composed entirely of interconnected computers. Someplace along the line, Cyberspace has become self-aware. Some hackers think Cyberspace is God.

The book at first seems to be about the extraction of a top scientist from a Texas installation, then it seems to be about the manipulations of the world's most powerful man and the distorting effect he has upon everything he touches. Eventually it is about the mysteries that erupt from the interplay of many disparate lives and minds, of forces that are beyond anyone's control or conscious-

ness. Gibson seems to constantly be taking greater chances, and he is always equal to the task. He never falters. *Count Zero* is an astonishing performance.

Gibson has created in *Count Zero* a thriller that is much more than a thriller, that is not only about the way we live and the way we may live, but about the very mystery and excitement of existence itself.

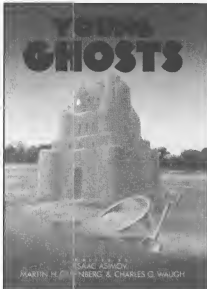
Paul Williams's *Only Apparently Real: The World of Philip K. Dick* (Arbor House, trade paperback, \$7.95) gives us a look at P.K.D. in the mid-seventies. The book is composed of a reworking of Williams's 1975 *Rolling Stone* profile interspersed with transcripts of conversations between Dick and Williams that took place over a three-day period in 1974, sometimes in the pre-



of language and image, and its machine gun rhythms was like watching a door open, revealing a landscape I hadn't suspected was there. It gave me a sense of pleasure and discovery I have not received from words in years.

Count Zero is state of the art sf. It's a turning point—it will change things the way Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey" changed things, and then Heinlein changed things, and then Sturgeon, and then Dick.

Gibson's control is, I think, unmatched. Not only his control of language and image, and of mood and character, but also his simple mastery of things. He appears to



sense of Dick's then-wife Teresa. Much of the talk revolves around the break-in and robbery of Dick's house that occurred in November, 1971, an event that seemed to vindicate many of Dick's feelings of paranoia.

Despite this paranoia, Dick is, by turns, unpretentious, enthusiastic, funny, and—unbearably lonely. (He went through five marriages and any number of live-in lovers. While he doesn't appear to have had trouble attracting women, the relationships didn't last.) Dick's isolation triggered a couple of suicide attempts and set him on a spiritual quest. In the mid-seventies he had several mystical experiences that freed him of some of his fears

by showing him an ordered, meaningful universe.

As Dick's work demonstrates, his concerns were the concerns of many of us. The premier voice of the Age of Anxiety, he wrote of our sense of aloneness, of meaninglessness. In the constantly deteriorating realities through which his characters struggle, he found an objective correlative for our time. But *Only Apparently Real* seems finally to be a trial run for a longer work. The biographical material is rather skimpy, much of it presented in a brief Chronological Preface, although Williams writes that as Dick's literary executor he has "become the temporary custodian of many thousands of pages of correspondence." This puts him at a distinct advantage over other prospective biographers (Gregg Rickman, for example, whose biography of Dick should be out by the time you read this, from a small California firm, Fragments West.) Williams's own Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter (Box 611, Glen Ellen, CA 95442) has published a good deal of information not to be found in this volume.

The scope of *Only Apparently Real*, then, has been rather sharply limited. What we have is an extended conversation that gives us the beginning of a sense of what it was like to know and talk to the man. If that was Williams's intention, he succeeded. But it left me wanting more.

Young Ghosts, edited by Isaac Asimov, Martin H. Greenberg, and Charles G. Waugh (Harper & Row, \$11.95), is one of a series from these editors, aimed at teens. Others include *Young Mutants*, *Young Extraterrestrials*, and so on; the gimmick here is that not only are the stories relatively simple, but the ghost-mutant-extraterrestrial, et cetera is a child. Asimov has contributed an introduction that is geared to children, but does not talk down to them. I am constantly impressed by the man's range and professionalism.

Then come the stories. There are twelve, most of them rather well written, but none really scary.

Several are quite predictable, including those by M. R. James, Richard Middleton, and Edward Lucas White. Interestingly, these also tended to be among the best written, crafted with care and aimed to instill

a sense of eeriness rather than horror. I myself prefer stronger stuff, and I did as a child, but I must say I did like M. R. James's "Lost Hearts," with its bizarre scholar villain. It was also nice to read a story by Edward Lucas White other than

the oft-reprinted "Lukundoo."

The other, more modern, less predictable stories were a mixed lot: Richard Matheson's "Old Haunts" spends a good deal of time setting mood and scenes—a travelling sales-

(continued on page 71)

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MAPDASH

Did you ever want to take those indecipherable handwritten directions and pitch them into the nearest

receptacle? Essentially, that's what you can do with the help of the Etak Navigator, the world's first Vector-graphic display roadmap

system for the car.

The navigator is a computerized monitor whose compact tape drive unit digests Etakmap cassettes of your terrain. Streets appear as a road map on the high resolution dash-mounted viewscreen. As your car moves, a sensor mounted in the rear wheels and a compass installed in the headlights or rear window move the map around it, so that what you see through the windshield is what you see on the monitor. A touch of the zoom button allows you to adjust the map scale from a ¼-mile to a 10-mile radius, and if you have

a specific destination in mind, you can mark it with a blinking star and figure out the easiest route to it as you drive. Positional accuracy is guaranteed to within 50 feet.

The monitor comes with a choice of 4-inch or 7-inch diagonal screen that retails for \$1395 and \$1595, respectively. Individual Etakmaps, which cost \$35, are easily updated to accommodate new roads and points of interest. The next generation of Etak navigator will also feature roadside services and places of interest. Next, the Etak chauffeur? For ETAK information: (415) 328-3825

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I SEE?

Sometimes purchasing stereo equipment is like buying Chinese food: one from column A, or one from column B—but no substitutions. But with Pioneer's CLD-900 LaserDisc unit, you should be able to satisfy your entire audio-visual appetite.

The CLD-900 is a harmonious marriage of the LaserVision music video with a Compact Disc providing audiophile-quality sound. Its objective lens, servo-systems, dual drives, and microprocessors are specifically designed to make Laservision's analog signals and CD's digital signals compatible, whether the system is accommodating 5-inch CD's or 8-to-12-inch standard-or long-play LV videodiscs. A fingertip-powered infrared

remote control allows easy random access to the video frames of your choice. They can be scanned, stopped, or flashed through at three times the normal speed and a digital time display lets you memorize exactly where your favorite scenes can be

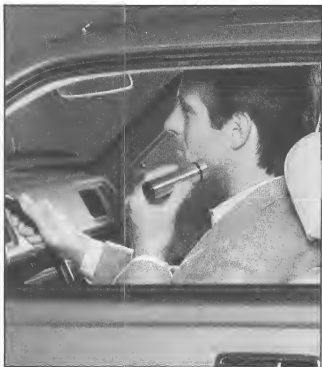
found.

For groupies looking to set world records in devotion, scenes can be played continuously up to 256 times in a row. When the CD unit is hooked up to a television monitor, the same display mode tells you which track is being

played, what the disc's total play time is, and how much time has elapsed.

So with the CLD-900 LaserDisc, you can get one from column A and from column B. And it's a cinch you'll always be hungry for more. For Pioneer information: (213) 420-5700





LISTEN TO YOUR FACE

Maybe it was the angle of the bathroom mirror light, or that tender spot you instinctively coddle with your safety razor. All you know is that you've got a meeting with the boss and you're sprouting a small ant colony under your jawbone.

It never would have happened if you'd started your day with Advanced Products' Soundshave. The principle behind the five-ounce battery-powered mini-razor is that you not only can see what's as plain as your face, you can hear it, too. Unlike conventional electric razors that buzz saw down your cheeks regardless of what is or isn't there, the three micro-thin stainless steel blades rotating at 1200 rpm behind the ultra-

sheer head of the Soundshave stop making noise when they've stopped digesting the stubble. When the whirring is over, you've got an even smoother shave, and your face doesn't feel like it just went three rounds with an over-zealous masseuse.

The best thing about the Soundshave is that it can do its magic without mirrors, so you can take it with you in the car on those mornings when you can't afford to be late or look grizzled. Its microphone shape fits conveniently into a pocket or glove compartment for early evening touch-ups. At \$24.95, it could be the most economic way yet to save face. For Soundshave information: (206) 883-8897

STAT-SHOESQUE

Maxwell Smart was the first man to talk to his shoe. Now, the Adidas Micropacer is the first shoe that talks back. And it speaks to you in tongues, no less. The left tongue of this men's running shoe is equipped with a liquid crystal display that gives you readouts on your daily running starts.

The Micropacer is not just a fancy pedometer that works on leg motion. A pressure sensor running under the big toe transmits impulses back to the battery-powered computer. Based on preset values for your weight, stride, and calorie metabolism, the shock resistant unit computes total running distance, total running time, average running speed, and calories burned. The system stops running when you do, and while you're

catching your breath you can get your vital statistics by pushing combinations of the four buttons flanking the meter face. Presuming that you'll be getting faster, looser, and svelter, the buttons also allow you to change your preset input as necessary.

But the Micropacer is more than just a fancy gadget to match designer sweats. The silver kangaroo leather uppers, pronation/supination controlling midsole and weight-supporting/shock-distributing outsole were designed to be biomechanically safe and efficient for runners who log as many as 85 miles a week. Although it retails for \$110, the Micropacer is the first shoe that will let you run like a Six Million Dollar Man. For Adidas information: (201) 233-8030





AFRICAN APHRODISIAC

If you were to play Alphabetical Africa—compiling a list of all things African beginning with the letter A—your list would certainly contain words like Antelope and Antelope. But now here's something new to add to the roster: African Aphrodisiac.

Julian Davidson, a Stanford neuroendocrinologist, recently published a paper in *Science* discussing the possibility of deriving a drug with aphrodisiac qualities from the bark of an African tree—yohimbine. In the article (August 24, 1984), Davidson wrote that the "data suggested that yohimbine may be a true aphrodisiac, since it increases arousal in sexually inexperienced male rats, facilitates copulatory behavior in sexually naive males, and induces sexual activity in males ...

previously ... inactive."

To acquire these results, Davidson and his research team injected male rats with an antihypertensive drug which had a "devastating effect on sexual behavior." The rats had "no motivation for mating, no evidence of sexual arousal."

Then the team attempted to reverse the effects with the yohimbine—and it worked.

At first, when news of these results reached the media, Davidson tried to explain his findings with the hope of informing the public about the taboo subject of male impotence. But he quickly discovered that the fine distinction between rats and men was often glossed over. While yohimbine may be an aphrodisiac when used on rats, Davidson reports that the drug has never been tested on human beings. Still,

he found that many tabloids misrepresented his findings. One article in a national newspaper, Davidson claims, actually ran a headline that read: "Love Potion from Tree Works Wonders for Impotent Men, Report Scientists."

Davidson indicates that years of research are still needed before yohimbine is found to be a cure for sexually impotent men. "But," says Davidson in *Science* '86 (Jan.), "I do believe that pharmacologic treatments for impotence will be discovered ... Hopefully soon."

SPACE COLONY MARS

The first steps are being taken to establish a permanent, manned base, even a colony, on the red planet Mars. Planetary scientist Carol Stoker, a National Research Council Fellow at NASA's Ames

Research Center in California, is now one of many Mars enthusiasts who believes life—human life—on Mars is possible.

When Stoker was just a student, in fact, she looked into the possibility (in theory) of actually transforming the Martian atmosphere into one like our own. "Basically," she says, "we came up with a scheme to crash a comet into Mars. That's how the planets got their atmospheres in the first place. So if it happened that way in the beginning, it was reasonable it could be done this way again." The comet would apparently contain the gases needed to support life, such as oxygen, which would be released when the comet crashed into the planet.

"But to crash a comet into a planet," says Stoker, "you have to do something heroic. First you'd have to find the right comet, one that crosses the orbit of Mars. Then you'd have to steer it by doing something like landing a mass driver on its surface which would perturb its orbit enough to drive it into Mars. But," she adds, "the technology to do this could take another one hundred to two hundred years."

Stoker then looked into yet another scenario for turning the Martian atmosphere into one like our own. "We looked into the possibility of introducing microbes into the Martian soil," she says, "which would eventually release gases for



human survival into the atmosphere. It seemed like a good idea, provided you start by heating up Mars a little bit, so the microbes could thrive on Mars, which is cold. But how do you heat up Mars a little bit? You can't really put it in an oven."

Finding these ideas too far-fetched, says Stoker, "We took up the idea of setting up a manned base on Mars. The planet," she explains, "can easily provide humans with the requirements for life." Mars offered water (probes have found that Mars has vast quantities of water stored as permafrost underground); food (it's possible to rinse the highly salted Martian soil with enough water to make it usable for greenhouse agriculture); and even shelter (astronauts could bore into Martian cliffsides to create high-tech habitats), according to Stoker.

How soon could all of this happen? Stoker claims that the National Commission on Space which was appointed by

the President has completed its work and is about to present its recommendations to Congress. "And," she says, "we have information that Mars will be a big part of their recommendation. We're looking at a twenty year time scale to complete our first Mars mission."

OF WIVES AND HATS

There was once a professor who couldn't recognize faces. So he would go around patting the tops of fire hydrants, thinking they were little children. And though this may sound like a story from the *Twilight Zone*, it is actually one of many "clinical tales" written by Dr. Oliver Sacks, a professor of clinical neurology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx. A clue to the book's informative but strange contents lies in its title, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat, And Other Clinical Tales* (Summit Books, \$15.95).

Dr. Sacks gathered the raw material for his book from his twenty

years in full-time clinical practice. In the title story, for example, Dr. P., a distinguished musician, loses his ability to distinguish people and objects at a glance. Although his vision appeared normal, he still mistook his wife's head for a hat; and he'd act accordingly; he'd try to lift his wife's head, as if it were a hat, and put it on his own.

Dr. Sacks notes that Dr. P. was not demented. He could carry on normal conversations, and he could play the piano, though he lost the ability to read music. But slowly and laboriously, Dr. P. did eventually learn how to work out an object by analyzing out loud what it looked like.

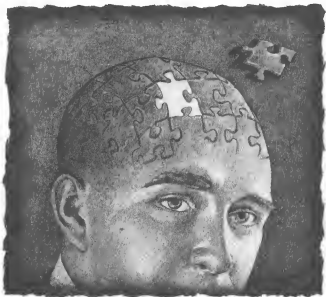
"And in this case," Dr. Sacks points out, "this had to do with an involvement of the visual part of the brain—the so-called visual association of the cortex.

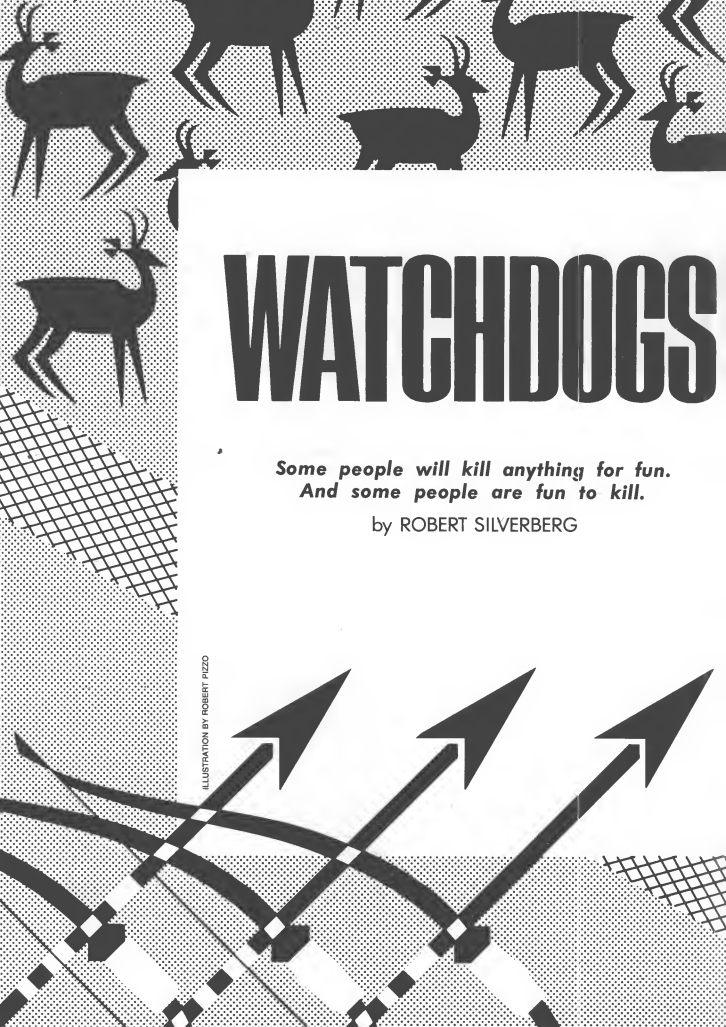
"In some cases," Dr. Sacks adds, "treatment

is possible, but in some it isn't. And all of my cases in the book do have some physiological basis. However, I do feel strongly that even if there is no treatment in the conventional medical sense, a great deal can be done by an understanding of what it is like for these people and by helping them cope."

In fact, Dr. Sacks says that his main reason for writing these tales was "to try and provide a feeling of sympathetic understanding. I think many such people with neurological problems are stigmatized as nutty when they are nothing of the sort. They are bravely trying to make the best of a very bizarre situation, struggling to be human and live the richest possible life."

So if you'd like to learn more about these strange afflictions (some of which can make people unsure of the reality of their own bodies), Dr. Sacks' book is your ticket. ■





WATCHDOGS

*Some people will kill anything for fun.
And some people are fun to kill.*

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT PIZZO



It was one of those slow, heavy summer nights, heat hanging like damp wool over everything. Mick said, "What about we do some night hunting tonight, Chazz?"

"Hunting?" Chazz said. "At night?"

"Pass the time," said Mick.

Lolie said, "Who the fuck goes hunting at night?"

"And where?" Chazz asked.

Mick gave them a long scornful look. "Who goes hunting at night is us. And where is out at the Branson place."

"The zoo?" Chazz said, blinking. He seemed to be having trouble believing that he had heard what he had heard. "Go hunting at old man Branson's zoo?"

"Right. The good old Branson zoo. Hunt us some buffalo, hunt us some gazelles. Maybe even hunt us some cheetah." Mick grinned and hooked an imaginary arrow in an imaginary bow and drew back the string until his right arm looked about ready to pop out of its socket.

"Whoosh!" he said, and let the arrow fly. He leaned close to Chazz, nose to nose. "Or we take out one of the elephants, huh? Beats hunting rabbits, man. You think anybody ever took out an elephant with bow and arrow?"

Chazz made a face. "Isn't possible," he said.

"With a poison-tipped arrow, maybe," Lolie said vaguely. "In -Africa, maybe that's how they do it. Eh, Mick?"

"Shit," Mick said. "You think that's sporting? 'Poison tip? We're talking about *sport*, man."

"I don't think you can do it just with a plain bow and arrow," said Chazz. "Hide's too thick. Unless you land it right in the elephant's eye—"



WATCHDOGS

He broke off, shaking his head. "I think the heat's put you off your head, Mick. You actually talking about going out there and let Branson's elephants loose? Let his fucking *cheetahs* loose? And us there with just a bow and arrow?"

"Sport," Mick said. "Pass the time. You chicken?"

"Who said? But at least I got some sense. You want to shoot an elephant, get yourself an elephant gun."

"Wake up half the county," Mick said. He nodded another imaginary arrow. "Well? You guys with me? We drive out there by midnight, hunt till the sun come up. Shoot any fucking thing you want. Zebra, chimpanzee, kangaroo. Make them hop, put an arrow up their ass. You think you can hit a kangaroo on the hop?"

"What about the burglar alarms?" Lolie asked.

"What alarms?"

"Fellow got a private zoo worth a million bucks, you think there's no alarm? Anybody can just walk in at midnight and shoot the place up for goddamn fun?"

"Seven four nine, three oh six," Mick said.

"What?"

"Seven four nine, three oh six. It's the alarm override. You climb a big eucalyptus tree by the north wall and jump over, and there's a control panel next to the buffalo enclosure. If you tap in the override numbers within sixty seconds after the scanner beam picks you up, it cancels the alarm."

"Yeah?" Chazz said. "You know that for sure?"

"I got it from Richie Slater's girlfriend Julie. Richie who works for old man Branson. Richie and Julie, they go inside some nights. They play with the animals and then they like to screw, right outside the cages. The smell of the animals turns them on, or something. That's what Julie told me. Julie, she was always weird, huh?"

"You're sure that weird Julie gave you the right number?"

"Look, Chazz, you just stay home tonight and forget you heard me say anything, okay?"

"I was just asking—"

"Me and Lolie, we'll go. You just stay home and do all the worrying for

us. Okay? Okay?"

"I didn't say I wouldn't go."

"Look at all the worrying you're doing, man."

"Those are reasonable questions I been raising."

"Lolie? Come on, Lolie."

Chazz said, "For example, what if Richie and Julie happen to be getting it on in there this very night just when we show up?"

Mick spat. To Lolie he said, "You got the bows in your van?"

"It's worth thinking about, isn't it?" Chazz said. "We start hunting things and Richie comes along and

The animals must have sensed something was going on, because they started to move in panicky little bursts, darting in and out between the oaks.

spots us, our ass is grass."

"Fuck you," Mick said. "It happens that Richie and Julie went to Sacramento for the weekend. Where's the van, Lolie?"

"In the Bank of America lot. I'll get it and drive around."

"Yeah. Well, good night, Chazz."

"Screw you. I'm coming."

"You are?"

"Bet your sweet dongolevio."

"You gonna worry about crap all the way there?"

"Those were reasonable questions, Mick."

"Well, you got any more reasonable questions you feel like asking?"

Chazz scowled. "Will you get off my case, Mick? Here comes Lolie with the van."

Mick was nocking arrows again. "Shoot a kangaroo first thing," he said. "Right up the old bazoo." He laughed. "The bazoo of the kangaroo! A poet and I don't know it! Hey, man! Hey, what a gas [this is going to be]!"

By half past eleven they were out by Clayton Corners, half a mile from the Branson place. They left the van there, killed a couple of six-packs, and went the rest of the way on foot. The moon was practically full and the bright clean light cut through the humid haze like a beacon.

The Branson ranch was six miles east of town, where the flat sprawling fields began to rise into the tawny foothills. The Bransons had about a hundred acres out there, and a dozen of them were fenced off around what must have been one of the best private animal collections in the country. Ned Branson collected wild animals the way some other rich men hunted them. He had made his money in building retail malls, and now he was ploughing it back into cheetahs and gazelles, elephants and kangaroos, all sorts of animals that thrived in the dry hot California back country. The state and county regulatory agencies gave him plenty of trouble, of course. But you don't get to make two hundred million in retail malls without putting together a pretty fair legal staff, and so far Ned Branson and his zoo had held off the bureaucracy without much trouble.

"Here's the tree," Mick said. "We go right up and over. Nothing to it."

"You mind if I ask a question?" Chazz said.

"Go on."

"How do we get out again?"

"This gate over here, it opens from inside. We open it and we walk out. Anything else, Chazz?"

"All right," Chazz said. "I just had to ask."

The tree was a fat thick eucalyptus maybe a century old, with peeling grey-and-white bark. It crotched five feet from the ground, and a heavy branch led up and out from there right over the back fence of the Branson compound. Easy. Real easy. Mick went first, vaulting up into the crotch and walking out on the big branch like a high-wire artist. Chazz tossed him the bows. Mick threw them over and jumped off after them into the darkness. There was the sound of a

soft landing on the far side of the wall. "Come on," he called, and Chazz went next, and then Lolie joined him inside the compound. Mick was on the far side, punching numbers into a key-board mounted on a post.

"Seven four nine, three oh six," he said. "There. We're safe." There was a big open meadow in the middle, dotted by a few wide'y spaced oak trees, and all around the rim of the place were cages and larger fenced enclosures with shadowy forms moving restlessly around in them. There were animals everywhere, half visible by moonlight, dark, indistinct, bulky shapes. Some of them were wandering loose in the meadow—gazelles, kangaroos, goats of some strange kind, llamas. A million smells were floating around, like barnyard smells, but much stranger. "Jesus, take a whiff," Chazz said. "This is what turns Julie on?"

"I told you she was weird," Mick said. He slipped his quiver over his back and started stringing his bow. The three of them had been hunting together since they were ten, rabbits mainly, deer now and then, sometimes stray dogs and cats when they got bored. Always with bow and arrow. They had taken up archery at first just to be a little different, but they had stayed with it because it was clean and quiet and because in all their years of hunting they had become very, very good at it.

"You really going to let the elephants loose?" Lolie asked.

"Shit, no," Mick said. "That was just to mess up Chazz's head a little. We can't do nothing with elephants. Anyway, the cages probably got alarms on them, too. But there's all these animals loose out here, the gazelles, the kangaroos. They ought to keep us busy for a time." He chose an arrow and laid it across the string.

Somewhere far away there was the sound of a bark.

"Mick?" Chazz said. "Mick, did Julie ever say anything about there being watchdogs in here?"

"You can't stop worrying for a minute, eh, man?"

"I heard something bark."

"Coyote, maybe. Or one of those dingy dogs from Australia. Or a dog in the house, even."

"And if it's watchdogs?"

"If it is, we can hit them before they hit us, right? They open their yaps and we put an arrow down their craws. Jesus, Chazz, lighten up! Lighten up! No problem, man!" And in one smooth gesture he brought his

bow up and sighted along the shaft and put an arrow deep into the flank of a gazelle far across the meadow.

The animal went about five feet straight up and arched its back in pain. When it came down, it tried to run, toppled, crashed. Lolie let out a whoop and brought down one of the kangaroos, which rolled over and furiously lashed its huge tail against the ground. Chazz, the best shot of the three, sent his first arrow beautifully through the long neck of one of the llamas.

These animals knew nothing about being hunted. But they must



have figured that something bad was going on, because they started to move in panicky little bursts, darting in and out between the oak trees. Mick nailed a second gazelle. Chazz drew a bead on one of the peculiar thick-shouldered goats.

Then he felt something like a white-hot needle stab him in the ankle, and he thought he would go crazy with the pain.

"Oh, Jesus," he murmured, dropping his bow and kneeling to grab his blazing foot. "Oh, oh, Jesus!"

Mick looked over. "Chazz? What—hey!"

"Holy Christ, like some kind of

giant ants all over the ground," Lolie gasped. "Those suckers must be an inch long. Chazz? Chazz?"

Chazz was rolling over and over, pounding the ground with his fists. There were ants on his arms and ants on his face, and he was sobbing and screaming. Weird, huge, evil-looking red ants with long legs and tremendous jagged-edged pincers, and what looked like stingers at the ends of their bodies; and when they stung, it felt like fire. Mick was down, too, and they were all over him. And then Lolie. He fell to his knees, swaying from side to side and slapping at the enormous ants. He began to cough and choke. The pain was hitting him in waves, dizzying, blinding, overwhelming. "Mick?" he muttered. "Chazz? Chazz?"

When Ned Branson came riding up in his jeep, ten minutes after the red light had gone on in the distant main house, the intruders already were in bad shape. Somehow they had managed to bypass the perimeter alarm, but the thermal-mass scanners in the meadow had registered the presence of unauthorized human intruders and that had automatically opened the gate of the ant colony. Not before the nitwits had killed a few animals, Branson noted, scowling. But they hadn't had time to do much harm, and they certainly weren't going to do any more. The three of them were huddled in a twitching heap, vomiting and choking. Their faces were swollen like balloons, black balloons, and it looked like one of them might be dead already. The ants were having a picnic on them. Australian bulldog ants, *Myrmecia gulosa*, the deadliest ants in the world. Thirty stings could kill a man in five minutes.

Branson unhitched the canister of anesthetic foam and aimed the nozzle. The foam came bubbling out. Too late for those dumb bastards, he thought, without regret. As the white foam engulfed them, the ants halted their frenzy and quickly became comatose. They'd stay that way until morning, when he could collect them and put them back in their colony. He didn't want them running loose all over the place, for God's sake. And in any case, he certainly didn't want to lose them. It hadn't been easy to get them here in the first place. A lot of red tape, and horrendous bribes for the import license. Not to mention the staggering field expenses to have them collected. Ants of that species are pretty damned rare, after all.



POST TIME

***On Important Days there were cheers
and hisses, crimson and gold —
and the pleasures of the pack.***

by BRUCE JAY FRIEDMAN

Though he knew he was the owner of an enormous power, he sensed quickly it was important to defer to the wiry little knot of energy who hopped upon his back and guided him on the Important Days. He knew as well that there were others like him, and he was at his most comfortable when he was in their midst, smelling and brushing up against them, feeling their length and sleekness against his own.

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT PIZZO

PIZZO



POST TIME

His entire life seemed to be a preparation for the Important Days. He had done well on the first of these. He knew this because the great babble that came from a surrounding arc seemed not to be directed at him, but at others like him, and perhaps one in particular. He would circle the large field and stay tied snugly to the other shapes, part of the flow, several in front of him, some alongside, some behind. He enjoyed being part of this communal sea.

The high point of his young existence came during one of the Important Days when he was making his

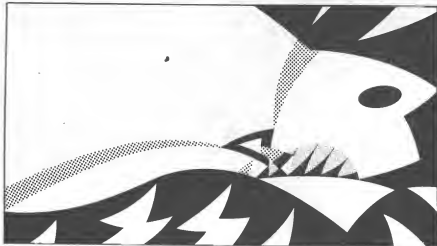
but a good one. He was fed amply—great bales of mash. Regularly, he was given chances to defuse the tornado in his flanks by running freely in open greenery. On these occasions, a more relaxed presence sat upon his back. Despite these pleasant interludes, he felt a sense of uneasiness and foreboding, though he could not locate its source. In confirmation of these fears, his fortunes took a rude downward turn. On two successive Important Days, he had been running comfortably, lost in the foam of the other shapes, when the small control knot indicated by various kneading pressures that he was to move in front of them. Though this was well within his power, he resisted gently until the prodding from above became commanding and he was forced to comply. Sick with humiliation, he left the comfortable flow and moved in front, naked,

a double-winged mask was affixed to him in such a way as to constrict his vision. He had a secret pool of untapped power; he vowed that on this occasion he would turn it in the direction of keeping himself hooked into the flow of shapes on either side.

Through half of the running, he succeeded in doing this, gliding, rocking, a section of the stream, returning to what now seemed his idyllic early days. He could not tell whether the soothing boos and hisses were strictly designed for him, but he declared a part of them for himself and basked in the comfort of them. Then, suddenly, the knotted-up force began to apply the pressures, grinding and pinching at him, urging him forward to that lonely and humiliating position—ahead of the other shapes. Momentarily, he held back. Shoots of anger formed within him, struggling to take root. He channeled a portion of that locomotive power into a single humped and resistant convulsion; but it was a manoeuvre that was alien to his docile spirit. Pinching, kneading, grinding, the choked little knot forced him forward until he bent to its will. Instead of inching forward, he made the decision, unopposed by the controlling knot, to burst forward and race proudly on toward his humiliation. Unleashing his full bank of energy, he wondered all the while about the irony of his having to apply this great birth-given force to his own disgrace. Almost enjoying the spectacle of his undoing, he plunged even further ahead of the other shapes until he was running alone, once again, ironically buoyed up by the thunderous babble of the arc that seemed to form an hysterical rainbow above his treachery.

At the end of the running, his disgrace total, he tried to cut short his agony by insinuating himself into the other friendly shapes, to return to that familiar smell and feel so similar to his own. But he was kept isolated and led, once again, in a slow dumb march before the arc. A small particle of the arc ran forward and placed a hot-colored slightly-brambled wreath around his neck. Meekly, he dropped his head and accepted the badge of dishonor.

The aggressive babble rose, more thunderous and compelling than before. Hellish lights half-blinded him. Powerless, defeated, he kicked at the dirt and tried with all the murky power of his being to fathom why he of all creatures has been singled out to lead a life of such unrelenting shame and ignominy.



final turn around the arc and slipped back to a kind of tail-like position with all the other shapes charging up ahead. He attached himself to their energy and let them carry him along, feeling free and passive. He knew he had done something wonderful, because the sound from the surrounding arc had a comfortable hissing and booing quality to it, quite unlike the aggressive babble to which he was accustomed. Nonetheless, he was puzzled by the behavior of the controlling knot who rode his back and seemed displeased, twisting his flesh and finally, applying a thwacking instrument to the massive flanks that held his engine-like power. He knew it was important not to invoke the displeasure of this crabbed little force; so he promised himself that on the next of the Important Days, he would forego the darting, dipping, freewheeling pleasures of the tail position.

It was a somewhat restricted life

vulnerable, outlaid, exposed to the babble that—on both occasions—grew deafening as he completed the final arc. Throatless, impotent, he wanted to cry out that this was not his decision—that there was no way for him to attach himself once again to the fleshlike stream and be sealed in its midst.

On both occasions, disgraced, his heart hanging low, he had been isolated from the other shapes and paraded before the rising arc, the babble thunderous, outrageous, filling his great body and coating his skin.

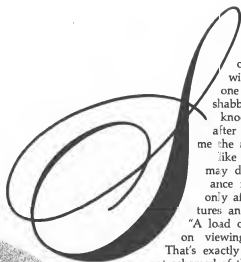
His trials were not over. There was yet another Important Day, perhaps the most significant of all. There was more clangour to it, a riot of color; the circling arc was vast. As he was led to the start of the running, the din rose in waves of intensity, as if to remind him that his shameful past deeds had not been forgotten. As if in further reminder of his infamy,



Angel's Eyes

Christmas crackers, damp bangers, chewed pipes, and tattered union jacks—things only a tut man could love. Mysteries only a tut man could read.

by GARRY KILWORTH

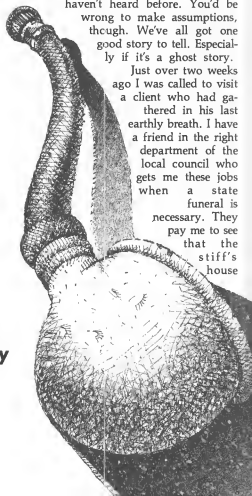


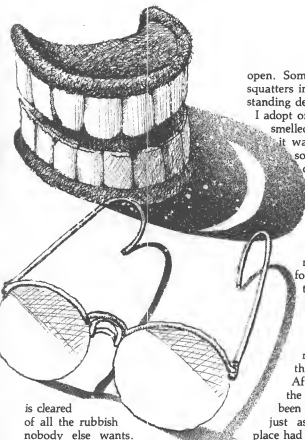
Some of you, at least, will have met me. I'm one of those grey-haired, shabby characters that knock on your door after the funeral. They call me the *tut* man. King Tut, I like to think, but others may disagree. House clearance is my speciality, but only after all the other vultures and jackals have been. "A load of old tut," they say, on viewing my market stall.

That's exactly what it is, and I'm not ashamed of the fact. Seaside mugs and rusted nutcrackers; a box of broken candles; some old Christmas crackers, the bangers, camp. Personal items, such as false teeth, reading glasses, and hearing aids. Who buys such junk, you ask? Well, I'll tell you. Under the last layer of visible poverty is a market for the goods: a hidden, desperate stratum of society that fails to emerge for anyone but me, the *tut* man. I can find them as the ratcatcher's dog finds its quarry. I nose them out.

There are rewards to be had, even in my lowly profession: spiritual as well as financial. Let me tell you about one—or don't, if you think a *tut* man's got nothing to say you haven't heard before. You'd be wrong to make assumptions, though. We've all got one good story to tell. Especially if it's a ghost story.

Just over two weeks ago I was called to visit a client who had gathered in his last earthly breath. I have a friend in the right department of the local council who gets me these jobs when a state funeral is necessary. They pay me to see that the stiff's house





is cleared
of all the rubbish
nobody else wants.
You can imagine the sort
of stuff I glean from these clearances
and the kind of clients I collect.

Mine is the lonely old lady who dies clutching the tattered union flag she had waved at Edward's coronation. I can sell that. Or the bitter old man with his set of chewed pipes and plastic model of the little Belgian boy which pees into a glass when you fill him up with beer. I can sell these, too. My clients then are sentimental hoarders of kitsch—and before you sneer, remember you're not yet senile or gaga enough to find these things important. Of course, I'm not a philanthropist and for me there is always the chance of finding a rare stamp, or a silver pot, black with disuse and missed by the antique dealer. I do more of a service than the others. I pick the bones clean. Anyway, the story.

The house was a narrow terrace with boarded-up windows in a heaving sea of rubble. It had been separated from its two neighbors by the use of rough surgery and was about to undergo similar demolition the following morning. The authorities must have been aware of the old man's terminal illness and hung on to save a bit of money in outpayments. The old boy had had no surviving relatives.

I had been given a key and I let myself in. The door hadn't seen paint for a decade and had swollen with the recent summer rain. I left it wide

open. Sometimes there are aggressive squatters inside, and I have no official standing despite the haughty demeanor

I adopt on such occasions. The rooms smelled of sickness and age, but it was a dry smell. I've been in some where the mold was crawling up the walls in damp fingers. I noticed that a dealer had already been: the living room was empty except for the curtains, threadbare as hessian. I unhooked them from the remaining two or three sliders, folded them carefully, and left them by the front door. The kitchen yielded a battered milk saucepan, some spoons that had lost their chrome, a plastic bucket, and five milk bottles. I took everything, including the bottles.

After all, it was my job to see the house was cleared. Had they been dead cats I would have been just as diligent. Apparently the place had to be declared empty before the council's destroyers could move in with the ball and chain.

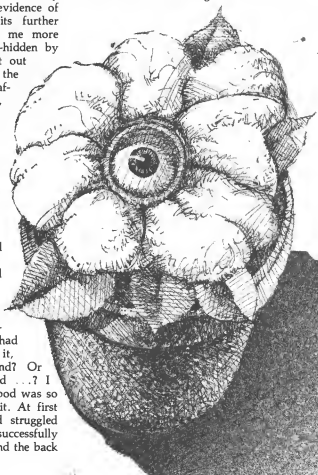
Under the stairs was a pile of tatty clothes which was strongly suggestive of the presence of a tom cat. My torch beam found further evidence of the animal's unfussy habits further back, but what interested me more was a cardboard box half-hidden by the gas meter. I hooked it out with my foot. I'm not the squeamish sort, you can't afford to be in my profession, but I wondered where that old tom was keeping himself. They can be belligerent creatures when suddenly disturbed: as crabby and spiteful as aging men. The box was the kind of small find which makes my work interesting. It was full of books and old pieces of junk which had been stored and apparently forgotten.

Suddenly, I was startled by a noise like a gunshot that reverberated throughout the house. I dropped the box and ran into the living room to find the door had slammed shut. I stared at it, vaguely puzzled. The wind? Or perhaps some passerby had ... I tried the handle, but the wood was so swollen I could not move it. At first I was merely irritated and struggled with the front door unsuccessfully before trying the windows and the back

door. The latter had all been nailed shut. Besides, the boards over the windows were of stout, half-inch thick timber. Thirty minutes went by and I began to feel anxious. I looked around for some implement to break through the wood but there was nothing of any strength left in the house.

I began to pace the floor as a serious thought entered my mind. *They were going to demolish the house early in the morning.* It was then late evening and would soon be dark. If I could not make myself heard ... I began shouting, "Help! Somebody, please help!" until my throat was dry. Through the slats over the window I could see the crane with the huge metal ball dangling from the gantry by a long chain. Maybe, *maybe* I could get the workmen to hear me in the morning, but it was possible that none of them would come near the house. The driver might just climb into his crane, trundle over, and begin smashing down the walls of my prison.

I continued pacing the floor and after a few minutes realized I was being followed. Nervously, and with a prickling feeling in my temples, I looked down. *The cardboard box was slithering in my wake.* I stopped and the box came to a sliding halt. Did the



Eyes

floor slope? It was difficult to tell since it was one of those rugged, concrete floors, raised amateurishly above the original. I had the eerie feeling that the box was waiting for something. Or was that my wandering old brain? I thought perhaps there might be some object in the box that would assist me in my escape. I bent down and began to rummage through its contents. As I began to sift through the junk I relaxed, the occupation being so natural to me I almost forgot I was trapped.

My first find was a bible—the King James' version, not one of your modern efforts. Personally, I never felt comfortable with a bible unless the text has plenty of thees and thous. Most of my biblical knowledge was learned by rote as a child, and I stumbled when faced with newly-edited verses. Once, in the course of my work, I came across a pidgin English bible in which the Lord's Prayer began "Him number one big fella, up in sky ..." I suppose aboriginals are as entitled as I am to Christian religion, but I didn't see why they couldn't sweat over the old text the same way I had to as a six-year-old. It was just as incomprehensible to me at that age as it would be to a foreigner with little English.

Inside the cover of the bible was an inscription: "To the Reverend Ashly Allendale, Christmas 1937." Under this appeared an indecipherable signature.

Reverend, eh? I thought. A vicar. Did they die like this, alone and impoverished? All the vicars I had known had worked until they dropped at the altar. Perhaps the bible and the man who had died had not belonged to one another. I checked the envelope on which I had scribbled the address and the name. *Mr. Allendale*, it said. Had he been unfrocked or had the passage of time smoothed away his old title? No reason, of course, why some of them shouldn't get tired of preaching, the same way other people get fed up with their jobs. So the man had been a vicar. I delved into the box again and came out with three photograph albums.

The first of them took me on the journey of a lifetime, from a smiling dog-collared young man, to an old but

gentle-faced Anglican who had dedicated his mortality to the service of the Lord. Clergymen often have the kind of face that reveals a history. I know if I had met the naked Ashly in the desert, I would have taken one look at his buck teeth, glasses, and unruly thatch of short hair and said, "Mornin', Vicar." Probably the opposite could have been said of me. Maybe Ashly could have pointed to a pile of clothes at a jumble sale and remarked, "They belonged to a tut man." We all have our labels.

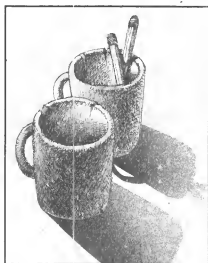
The photographs, at first very grainy and of poor quality but gradually improving in definition—though not necessarily more professional from an artistic standpoint—were all of christenings. Through the

The photographs were of births, marriages, and deaths. Click, click, click. And that was your life.

years, Ashly Allendale had collected pictures of himself baptizing innumerable infants, all looking the same in long, white shifts. Most of them were crying. I flicked through the pages trying to detect some differences in the walnut faces that began in 1906 and ended with the last, a color photograph dated 1970, but it could have been the same baby every time.

Where were all those infants now? Scattered over the earth: some still at school, some grown, some almost certainly dead. Recorded here was a lifetime of crossing foreheads with holy water and hoping the recipient did not turn out to be a murderer or a coward; a wifebeater or a prostitute; a Catholic convert or a suicide.

The second album was similar to the first, except that it was weddings,



and the smile on Ashly's face was a little more wistful. It seemed to me that I had got them the wrong way around. I should have looked first at this album and then tried to tie in the babies with the parents: match one small round face with two larger faces.

The third and last album was the thinnest and definitely the most intriguing of them all. I don't mind admitting I found the thing a bit grisly at first. Macabre, if that isn't too old a fashioned word for you. It was funerals, of course. Not many, but enough in a full career to fill a slim volume. They were almost all newspaper cuttings, as crisply-dry as dead leaves. Dignitaries would be the subjects of the yellowing clippings. The average family does not usually require a photograph of the burial of one of its members, but the local press often required spacefillers. They were monochrome, of course, as befits a passing on. Dark shapes against dark skies. Unreal, and dire in their sobriety. Obviously the camera angles, often vertically oblique, were such as to attempt to induce a mood into the scenes, but there was more than that. Surely people were buried on sunny as well as storm-clouded days? Yet all the cuttings showed skies in a state of turmoil. Maybe they doctored the prints in the dark room afterwards to add a touch of Victorian drama?

Births, marriages, deaths. Perhaps I had not got them the wrong way around after all but had, in three stages, the most important fragments of a lifetime? Three flashes in the history of a woman or man: a hundredth-of-a-second, click, click, click. This is your life. One, two, three, all gone. Anonymous histories, since all the captions had been removed from the sombre black-and-white records of

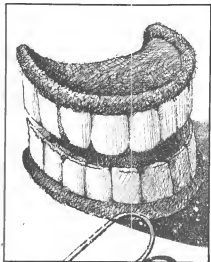
the day of reckoning.

All those grief-stricken faces, too, and tears. No smiling Ashly in these pictures. A grave face for a grave occasion. Obviously he had treasured his albums, my newly-found Anglican vicar, which caused me to wonder even more about the apparent mutilations. With only one or two exceptions, the funeral photographs had been attacked by the hand of a child wielding colored crayons.

There was no evidence to suggest, either way, that Ashly Allendale had been married and had children. Of course, he may have had nephews and nieces who could lay their hands on the precious collections, but somehow he did not seem the sort of man who would be careless with his treasures. And why was it only the funeral album that had been vandalized? Why not the weddings and christenings, too? And the precise nature of the markings indicated definite targets for the colors.

I studied the pictures more closely in the light of my torch and my puzzlement increased. Although the artist had been careless, his or her talents had been confined exclusively to the faces of stone angels: more particularly to the eyes on those images. Was there a touch of black magic at work here? Perhaps the remote desecration of sacred ground?

I placed the album with its companions and began emptying the other items out of the box. Soon I had all the pieces ranged across a rug in my parlor. It was then I realized I had, once again, been fortunate. The box had yielded its plenty: seven pairs of spectacles of which the oldest had solid gold frames. It was not a reward, for I had not earned it, but something much more pleasurable. It was a *find*. Since a boy I had collected things:



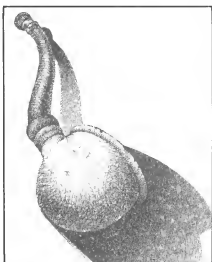
seashells, matchbox labels, cigarette cards. There has always been an onrush of joy which accompanies an unexpected rare addition to my collections. As a child I would turn over a rock on the shore and yell with delight at the sight of a tapestry cone. Or perhaps walking, eyes ever on the ground, I would find a matchbox face down in the gutter. The utter, speechless joy that flooded my heart at the discovery of a brand no other boy yet owned . . . well, I'm jaded, of course, but the feeling, however muted, still finds me out. Its origin is mercenary now, so I carefully wrapped the spectacles in question in a soft yellow cloth, intending to see them at the first opportunity.

Suddenly, I remembered my pre-

All those grief-stricken faces, too, and tears. Grave faces for grave occasions. No smiling Ashly here.

dicament. I still had to get out of the house. But I had my torch. I could shine it through the slats on the windows. Perhaps someone would see it and investigate? There was a sound by my feet and looking down I saw that the other pairs of glasses were arranged in a neat row. I thought: *I don't remember doing that*. The arrangement was curious because, on closer inspection, I could see that they were arranged in order of the thickness of their lenses. Surely that was not coincidence? Too incredible. I considered the slamming door and the slithering box. The wind? A sloping floor? Or was there something that was required of me? Some sinister task?

"Allendale," I yelled, not without a feeling of foolishness. "Let me out!" A waterpipe from the kitchen wall suddenly tore loose from its fittings and



swung down. A lump came to my throat instantly and I almost choked on my fear. The waterpipe came to rest at an angle which had its open end pointing at the spectacles. I swallowed my fright and after a few moments realized that I had to study the glasses. For what? A puzzle? Did I have to solve a puzzle to ensure my release? I pored over them, from the lightest to the pebble-heavy pair with the black horn rims. This would have been the order in which Ashly had worn them, for seldom does a man's eyesight improve with age. The sad end to the story was obvious: Ashly had steadily lost his vision toward the latter part of his life. There was also very little wear on the black horn rims, which indicated that he had died totally blind—otherwise they would not have been in the box with the other specs; they would have been with the items found on the corpse. Blind.

I reached out and opened the funeral album and studied again the colored angels' eyes. The crudeness of the artistry need not have been due to lack of craftsmanship but perhaps to the rapidly failing sight and frail hands of an old man. I pondered for a few minutes, turning over the pages slowly, trying to see some pattern. It did not come to me immediately, although perhaps you have already guessed. Remember, I am offering you clues which I had to discover for myself.

I replaced the contents of the box and turned out the light. Standing there in the dark I saw, as it were, my unwitting benefactor's problem and fear—the angels were blind. I switched on the light again and the final clue was presented to me. A paperback book entitled *The Ancient Greeks*, which dealt with the golden age of

Eyes

Greece, flew open, as if in a draft. The pages rippled over until the book lay still. The writing on the page was heavily underlined, and reading the section, I discovered, as had Ashly, that the ancient Greeks did not leave their beautiful marble statues in their natural state, as we see them today, but decorated them in gorgeous colors. They painted on the clothes, and the features, *including the eyes*.

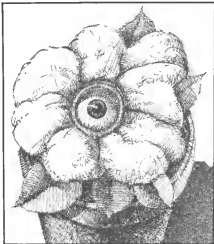
Written in the margin of the page were some pencilled notes, such as you find in old volumes of Tennyson or Keats. The scrawl read: "See Oxford Ed. of Indian Myth. Death's Eye Cult."

An eyeless man whose interest had been awakened by cults and who believed in sight beyond death. What did it all mean? What was I supposed to do?

"Ashly!" My words echoed round the empty-roomed house. "If you're dead, show me what it's like."

Suddenly, I could not see. Panic ran riot in my breast. I almost choked on my fear. Was this revenge on the living? Was he reaching out from the grave, robbing me of my sight? *Blind*. It was a terrible sensation. The blackness seemed tangible, suffocating.

I fought for control of my feelings. No, no. I had asked him what death was like and he was showing me. He wasn't vindictive. He needed my help. He had merely turned out the lights, and I was experiencing the blackness of the grave, experiencing what he had to face for the whole of eternity.



"What do you want?" I cried.

The lights went on again and relief flooded through me. I could see.

He wanted his sight back. But how was that possible? What could I do to help him?

"Show me. Show me what I must do!"

One of the scrap books began to ripple, the pages turning over. A sense of frustration rose in me as they flashed from one to the other. Then they came to rest on a page which showed a gravestone angel with the eyes crayoned in. Blue eyes. *Seeing eyes*.

It suddenly dawned on me.

"You want an angel like that? On your grave. To see with?"

The lights flashed and a rapturous note wailed from the waterpipe, as if wind were blowing across its end.

The lights flashed on and off rapidly and a rapturous note wailed from the waterpipe, as if wind were blowing across the opening at its end.

So that's all he wanted: someone to place a painted angel on his grave. Someone to return his sight to him, so that he could witness the changing seasons. The angel was to be his eyes. Sight by proxy. That which was stolen from him in life, he wanted to reclaim in death.

"All right! Tomorrow. I'll do it tomorrow."

A cold draft blew about my ankles. I stood, nervously, in my own torchlight, beginning to suspect I had been making an idiot of myself at a time when I should have been employ-

ing my wits to better use, when the front door suddenly flew open.

The following morning when I awoke, I telephoned the three stone masons listed in the Yellow Pages to enquire whether someone had recently ordered a colored angel for a grave. I received various replies, two of them rather brusque—and negative. I then called my original informant and asked where the Rev. Ashly Allendale had been interred. I was given the name of a cemetery.

"I see," I said into the mouthpiece. "Tell me, are they very fussy there about the headstone? I mean, if he had wanted an elaborate effort, would they object?"

"They did," was the reply. "The old boy's will said he wanted a figure erected on the tomb, but they wouldn't allow it. Being a state funeral he went into the new cemetery on the far side of town. They don't permit headstones, not the vertical type anyway. You have to have one of those slabs that lie flush with the ground, so that they can run a mower round the edges. It's a lawn cemetery."

I replaced the receiver. Poor Ashly. Dead and blind and no hope of recovery from either. I shrugged. What could I do about it? Even if I were to order a painted angel they wouldn't let me put it on his grave.

But a tut man doesn't give up easily. He worries a problem until he has it cornered, and it either goes for his throat or he gets it into the bag. Anyway, I was damned if I wanted Ashly back again. The solution came to me as I drove past the place where the old romantic had been laid to rest in eternal solitary confinement. I noticed that the graves were not completely undecorated. I went to the nearest florist and asked a lot of silly questions but eventually came up with the goods: a small potted shrub with bright blue flowers which the assistant assured me the Austrians call *Die Augen Der Engels*—angels' eyes. It took it back to the graveyard and planted it in the hole they leave in the middle of the slab. Every spring, and on through summer, Ashly would be able to see the world he had left behind. Not that I think the world amounts to anything worth looking at, but, hell, the old vicar had done me a favor with the goldrims, and if it put his soul to rest, well, it was a small return. Anyway, I sold the pot the plant had been in that very morning, off the s'all. A few pence here, a few pence there—it's not to be wasted.

Portrait: EDWARD LARABEE

***Edward would let nothing prevent
him from claiming his birthright.
Nothing. Not even the ghostly
presence of his mother.***

by BARBARA OWENS

She came again last night to stand at the foot of my bed. The French doors to the balcony were open for the night air, and when I woke with a start there she was, moonlight bathing both of us in ghostly cold light.

Her hair was loose, flowing white around her shoulders, and she wore the old brown dressing gown I had always loathed. Both hands were clasped under her chin; as I watched, she stretched her arms toward me and her lips began to move. A perfect torrent of words appeared to rush along the bed toward me, but, of course, I heard no sound.

As I recovered from the sudden awakening, I watched her. Not with fear, as on her first appearances, but rather with curiosity, a certain wry amusement, and a growing irritation with her theatrics. She was beginning to tire me with her presence—I wanted done with her, once and for all. How she seemed to entreat me, how beseechingly her old eyes met mine. The dressing gown's sleeves flapped and swooped like birdwings as her gestures

broadened and grew more dramatic. Finally, firmly, I interrupted.

"Mother, please. Go away. Stop bothering me. You're dead—I killed you. There's nothing either of us can do to change that, so have the courtesy to leave me in peace."

An annoying factor in attempting communication with a . . . presence, I've found, is the difficulty in doing so. Her silent monologue continued until, with a sigh, I rose from my bed. The possibility of confrontation always seemed to frighten her—undoubtedly she remembers how she met her end. Last night it succeeded again. With widened eyes, she backed away from me until she melted into the shadows at my bedroom door.

Once aroused, however, I could not return to sleep. Alone in the dark I enjoyed the comfort of my home, the Larabee estate, governed and cherished by my family for generations. With great pride I reviewed my history, pausing before each portrait lining the grand front stairway. Edward I, fierce in his whiskers; Edward II with the monocle he affected; Edward III, who lived grandly and died young; Edward IV, my father, weak

PHOTOGRAPH BY TETSU OKUMURA



Portrait

chin sadly confirming the whole of his nature.

My portrait was missing. She had removed it again, a gesture designed to pester me in death as she had pestered me in life. I spent the better part of the night searching, finally coming upon it hidden deep within the recesses of the attic, face against the wall. I hung it in its proper place—Edward Larabee V, sole heir to the vast family fortunes and finally master of his fate—although it had taken a slight act of violence to accomplish. Regarding my own distinguished countenance, I was pleased. Things were once again as they should be, and I could sleep.

Today I walked along the river path and through the fields nearest town. It was a walk I had taken many times as a boy with my father, before we became estranged from one another. At that tender age I believed him to be the most important and influential man in the world, and I took his advice and plans for my future very seriously. All our times together were devoted to my training as his successor, both in action and philosophy, and I listened carefully to everything he said, to me and to his workers, the men and women who tended the fields and maintained the accumulation of buildings, gardens, and livestock that had increased and passed from father to son since the country was young.

At one point along the river, a bluff rolled up to a lookout point adorned by a single giant oak, and under this tree my father had a stone bench constructed. In our walks we always paused at this spot to sit and survey the river and lands beyond. Each time I thrilled, realizing that everything I saw ("And then some," my father would add) belonged to my father and would someday belong to me. At a very early age, this became my obsession—the control and expansion of the Larabee empire. While other boys swam in the river and chased one another, hooting, through the streets of town, I devised strategies to increase the Larabee holdings, both for my own satisfaction and for my

son's. I vowed to pass to him a power and fortune so vast that it could not be curtailed by anything or anyone.

I stopped at the stone bench today. It was early. Grey mist still clung to the river, shrouding the lands beyond. I reflected on those early walks with my father, and how quickly I'd come to recognize his weaknesses, which had diluted the position passed to him from his fathers. As I matured, I studied his methods closely, analyzing their threat to my inheritance. The twentieth century was new, the country growing again after the Civil War. Opportunities were unlimited for aggressive men with power and money, but my father was too timid, and certainly not interested in ideas from someone so young as I.

And he was soft with his workers. Even as a boy, I saw how they cheated him, lied to him, blatantly stole from him. He told a story of his grandfather—of how Edward II had caught a worker stealing a pig from his sty and shot him dead as he stood. I respected this outlook and determined to emulate it; thus our estrangement began. I thought it fortunate that he died when I was scarcely twenty. I had a lifetime to repair the damage and oversee the growth of my empire.

Unfortunately, I had not considered my mother's part in all this. Truthfully, I had never thought much about my mother at all. I knew that my grandfather, Edward III, had fiercely opposed the marriage. She was of inferior stock, unworthy of the Larabee name. Grandfather considered her

to be an unwise influence on my father, but his early death defeated his vow to prevent the union. And I, sad to say, wasn't aware of the strength of her influence until after my father's death. That shock took years to overcome. When at last I did, and realized she seemed set to live forever, there was no alternative. She had to die. And die she did, by my Larabee hand. Yet still she shows herself to me, a pesky gnat who continues to annoy me with her refusal to retire gracefully and leave me to my Larabee right.

She surprised me today. I had just come in from a review of the stables, well pleased with their appearance. The horses were sleek and lively, the premises scrupulously maintained. In passing, I observed the men working with vigor, but I saw no need to address them, and they are not allowed to speak to me without permission. The results of my management constantly reaffirm my conviction that a firm hand is superior to my father's passivity. I am seldom dissatisfied with my men.

In the great dining room I stopped before the Larabee collection of silver, wanting to be sure it was not in need of polish. When I turned she was there, standing by the doors into the main garden, eyes fixed on me.

She'd never come to me in daylight before, and I was struck instantly by how old and ugly she appeared. Her dress was long and bulky, of some dull, unflattering shade, and her





thin hair was knotted carelessly on top of her head. Her face was shrunken and wrinkled. She looked at me, clutching her chest with one hand and covering her face with the other. She looked so harmless and I felt so jaunty that I initiated one of our meaningless conversations.

"Well, here you are again, Mother. I was just admiring my silver." She raised her head, lips moving, but since neither of us could hear the other, I saw no need to stop. "A grand collection, don't you agree? Do you know its worth? I do—to the penny. I like to come here and admire it, but you know that, don't you?"

Her mouth twisted; one shaking finger pointed at me. I thought I saw tears glistening on her cheeks. Whatever she was saying, she was most certainly in earnest.

"In fact, it was in this room that your downfall began, Mother. You found me here, reviewing the silver, before we were to assemble for the reading of Father's will. What pleasure it must have given you to reveal that he had left everything in your control. Not a penny could I lay my hands on without your permission, not one minor decision make unless it passed your approval. Remember my shock, Mother, not to mention dismay? Father wasn't sure of my capabilities, you said; he strongly disapproved of my methods. I couldn't understand how you managed it. I tried for years to break the provisions, remember? But you had done well. I was powerless as long as you survived."

She backed away, head shaking, mouth still working. How I wished I could hear what she wanted to say.

"Survived. That was your mistake, Mother. It was a long time coming, but it began right here on that day."

She was gone, through the doors into the sunlit brilliance of the garden. How many more times, I wondered, before she concedes and goes on to wherever it is she has to go? She must see I'm determined and not the least frightened of her.

As I passed the stairway on my way to the library, again I noted the absence of my portrait on the wall. This time I unearthed it in the root cellar, and there was a dark smudge across the nose. It is in its place again, and I have managed to retain my humor despite this whole silly business. After all, I'm here and she's there. One of us has to lose. And I'm the Larabee, not she.

Now, three days later, she has become more noticeable by her absence. Perhaps it is finished. I've been spending long hours in the study going over my overseer's records and accounts. I have found no discrepancies, but the work is not as detailed as I specified. He shall hear about it in very plain language.

This afternoon, as I passed the back steps rising to the kitchen, I glanced up to see that a large portion of the stone cornice over the kitchen door had fallen. It appeared to be an old fracture. The exposed edges had

darkened. I was shocked that this had not been reported to me and that I had not noticed it before. True, the house is well over one hundred fifty years old, but I was surprised at myself for being so lax. But then, the entire exterior needs refurbishing. Several cracks in the stone walls are visible upon close inspection. I shall issue the order to begin repairs at once.

As I strolled the woods bordering the main drive this morning, I thought I saw Mother passing in a carriage. Fog lay thick among the trees, and I was just remembering the scores of squirrels and rabbits I'd bagged there as a boy, when I glimpsed something moving up the drive. I could have sworn it was the old carriage, and that Mother and another person were aboard, but then the mist swallowed them and my ears registered no sound. It would be just like her to manifest another ... presence ... to assist her in her haunting, but I'm impressed if she has somehow managed to produce a horse and carriage!

I've experienced a light bout with fever for the past several days. It was not serious, only a slight weakness and blurring of vision; at times everything seemed vague and indistinct. My movements faltered, so I kept to my bed. I feel much stronger today.

Last night she appeared again at the foot of my bed. I was awake, restless with the fever, but I didn't see her until suddenly she was there. She seemed different. From her expression she seemed to be reasoning with me instead of pleading, and her eyes looked sharper. She studied me closely as I smiled back at her from my pillow.

"Beware of confidence, Mother. Yes, I've been unwell, but no harm done. Already I'm feeling better, and tomorrow I'll be up minding my empire again."

I raised a hand to shoo her away, but she was already gone. I dozed a bit, then something urgently roused me, and I hurried as best I could in my condition to the lower floor. My portrait's absence struck me as I passed and I found it in the drawing room fireplace where she had attempted to burn it. The fire had gone out, but the edges still smoldered. There was no time for anger. I put out the glowing remains with my bare hands and replaced it at once, leaving the blackened frame and scorched spots on the canvas as a reminder that I wouldn't be banished so easily. She truly tries my patience, this ... presence. She should remember she can push me only so far.

Portrait

Although autumn is upon us, the sun was warm in the front garden today. I sat on the stone bench beside the fountain and let it restore the remainder of my lost strength. I am not quite back to my old self, but am ready to continue my responsibilities.

She wouldn't let me rest, even there. I spotted her in the shadow of the lilacs. For the first time she didn't begin her incomprehensible mouthings. She just stood watching me, and I thought I saw a sadness in her face. She wore a dark dress of some thick material and a man's heavy sweater. After a moment, she turned and vanished into the trees.

On the day she died she wore a blue dress, I remember. I found her seated on that same stone bench by the fountain. She had been working in the roses, and I made my announcement without amenities or preamble. So I clearly remember her face when I told her.

"I've been so dedicated to my struggles with you over the family holdings, and so determined to keep you from destroying the work of generations, that I've reached forty without realizing I have no heir. You can't live forever. I must prepare for the Larabee future. I will marry within the month."

Her mouth opened, gapping like a fish, but I didn't heed her.

"I'm aware of what people think of me, but that is part of the Larabee inheritance. Popularity is of no consequence to me. I have rendered a proposal to Emily Farrow, which she has accepted. Emily is no prize, I grant you, but that is of no consequence either. She will provide a male heir. I realize I cannot control the Larabee fortunes so long as you live, but I must insist that you gather your belongings and take up residence elsewhere upon my marriage. I do not want you living here. This is my house, not yours."

Her mouth gaped again, and she made a foolish sound—half gasp, half sigh. "Edward, you can't marry!"

"What do you mean, I cannot marry?"

She twisted on the bench, looking embarrassed and hesitant, as well she might.

"The provisions of your father's

will—could you have forgotten? If you marry, you are disinherited without appeal. It's most unfortunate that your father was so disappointed in you, Edward. He was adamant in his conviction that there should be no more Larabees. Upon the death of his last surviving heir, the Larabee holdings are to be dispersed at public auction."

How clearly I remember the thoughts raging through my head at that instant. Truly I did not recall hearing that stipulation, I had been so stunned at the disclosure that the Larabee millions would be in her hands, not mine. I was convinced she had somehow caused all my misfortune. My father could never have been so clever and cruel. He had been weak, but he was a Larabee. There was the blood of prestige and power in his veins.

She moved away from me then, and as she passed from view behind the corner of the house, I was quick to follow. There was no rage in my heart, only the clear calculation that I must be rid of her before I could take stock of this incredible dilemma.

I reached her at the kitchen door and made do with the only weapon at hand—the heavy iron poker used for firing up the laundry kettle in the yard. She looked behind and saw me. The first blow fell wild. She sank to her knees, and the poker struck the house with terrible force. I wish I could remember the second blow, the one that killed her. That memory would satisfy me greatly. But I don't remember it. A great roaring filled my ears at that point, and the triumph is gone from my mind. A pity. It would make revenge sweeter now, as I enjoy the fruits of the Larabee fortune and she returns to reproach me helplessly from beyond.

I woke slowly, thinking I heard voices. There was no moon. My room lay in darkness, but a ghostly rectangle signified the outlines of my open bedroom door.

Then voices, where there had been none but mine since the day my mother died. I sat up in bed, strangely disoriented. Shadows around me seemed to waver, familiar forms to distort and fade away.

I heard my mother's voice. Hers and another's—a woman's deep voice, soothing, flowing. She was calling to me: "Edward, Edward Larabee, come to us. Come to us, Edward, we're waiting for you."

I closed my eyes as sudden faintness seized me, but the voice con-

"This is my home!" I shouted, and the sound of my voice magnified, shrieking from every crevice in the room.

tinued to call, and I experienced an urge to obey so strong that I found myself outside in the second floor hallway before I was fully aware of my actions. My weakness intensified. I was forced to support myself against the wall as my trembling legs carried me closer to the stairway and toward the warm compelling voice.

It rose from below. As I neared the head of the stairway, I saw light flickering through the double doorway of the great dining room. The voice emanated from there: "Come, Edward, come. Come to us. We're waiting."

It drew me. I seemed powerless to resist. Then I heard my mother's voice.

"Hurry! Hurry, please. I'm so frightened!"

I stopped, swaying, one hand firmly on the banister. In all her appearances, during all her grotesque mouthings, I had been unable to hear her voice. Why was I hearing it now? I felt no fear, only a vague disquiet and alarm at my unsteadiness. Was I having a recurrence of the fever?

The voice bore me along. I was descending the stairway, feeling my way carefully: with each step. My fingers brushed the faces of my



ancestors. Where my portrait hung, they encountered smooth blank wall. Blast the woman! I would be done with her tonight, one way or another.

"Come, Edward. Closer. Closer."

I stood in the open doorway and saw them, seated at the far end of the grand table. My mother's eyes met mine. She gasped, and her hands flew to her throat. She looked ancient, haggish. Lighted candles danced before them on the table, their light striking the Larabee silver in their cabinets with a thousand blows and piercing my eyes like many needles. I made a distasteful sound, causing my mother to utter a little scream.

"Is he here?"

She sat at my mother's elbow, head reclining against the chair's high back, eyes closed. She was fat, enormously billowed, face flat and squashed like the pug dog we had when I was a boy. I felt an instant's amazement that such a wondrous voice could issue from that body.

"Yes!" my mother shrilled like some silly bird. "He's here! Quickly—please, do it now!"

I was almost overcome by waves of faintness growing more ominous,

but anger gave me the power to stride into the room, and my mother moaned, shrinking from my approach.

The fat woman did not open her eyes. "Wait, Edward. Do not come closer," she said, and I was stopped, planted in my place.

"What are you doing here?" I managed. My anger increased. How dare these two desecrate my home! "My patience is ended. Go away at once!"

This was directed to my mother, but the fat woman answered. Mother cowered in her chair, staring eyes fixed on me.

"No," the woman said. "You must understand. It is you who must go. You, Edward. You must leave this place and you must not return."

Her voice flowed through me, filled me, and I felt obliged to follow her bidding, but my Larabee pride held me. No . . . presence was going to force me from my rightful place.

"No," I said in quite a reasonable tone, but the sound was distorted in the confines of the room—rose, reverberated, groaned like a wail from beyond the grave. My mother cried out, clapping her hands against her ears. The fat woman neither flinched nor

opened her eyes.

"Yes," she continued, voice lulling, calm, pushing against me in firm, gentle waves. "You must go, Edward. You do not belong here. I have paved the way for you. Now, tonight, you will leave this place and rest in your proper home."

"This is my home!" I shouted, and again the sound of my voice magnified, shrieking from every crevice in the room. My vision dimmed. I felt quite ill, and my mother looked ready to faint.

"No," the woman sighed. I struggled to see her in my fading sight. "No more. No more is this your home. You cannot stay here. You will obey me. I have visited this house before, uttered the words that weakened your hold. I cannot resist. You must do as I say. I am going to send you home, Edward. Go in peace. You will not return."

The candles flickered, dimmed. I could scarcely see the two figures at the table; my head swam alarmingly.

"You damnable woman!" I thought I roared the words, but only a weak whisper drifted to my ears. "How have you accomplished this evil thing? You are dead! I killed you with my own hands!"

"No! No! No!" my mother shrieked, hands flailing wildly. "It is you, Edward, you who are dead! You tried to kill me, yes, but struck and dislodged the cornice over the door. It fell on you. You are dead, Edward! Oh, please, please go. I cannot bear one more glimpse of that great bloody wound in your head!"

I felt myself reeling backward, suffocating. No. How could it be? Lies! I was Edward Larabee V, this woman had all but destroyed my life, and now—

My mother sobbed, covering her eyes. I seemed to fall backward, only dimly hearing the fat woman crooning.

"Go now, Edward. You cannot resist. Do not return, do not return. Leave this place, Edward Larabee, I command you. Go now. Go." She lapsed then into a foreign tongue, and as the words closed around me, I felt myself fall.

Slowly, endlessly. Sight and sensation deserted me. All figments of the figures seated at my table, of my Larabee home, my birthright, dissolved.

This place where I have settled is strange and cold. Cold. It is exceedingly cold. Everything I have known is gone. I am alone here. No one even knows my name. ■

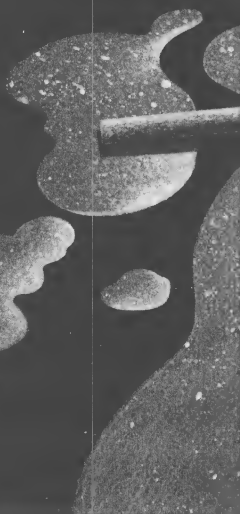
MILK

Judd had a taste for the creamy stuff. It was foamy and white and he took it through a straw. Constantly.

by **DONALD R. BURLESON**

Well, I must say—you've all told some great stories. Yeah, I know it's my turn. But hey, look, it's getting pretty late, isn't it? No, no, I'm not just trying to weasel out of it—come on, Carl, you know me better than that. I've got a story, but I don't know that I ought to tell it. The way it was told to me still gives me the creeps when I think about it. I'm not being theatrical, Barbara; it really does.

I heard it during that trip to southern New Hampshire three years ago. The old man who told me the story was a genuine old down east type, had lived near Bangor, Maine, but moved in with his daughter and her husband when his wife died some years before; they lived up in Merrimack, north of Nashua, in an area called Reeds Ferry. I ran into him in a little Nashua bar the night before I started home. There was a hell of a storm that night, and on my way back to my motel I ducked in there to get out of the snow and maybe have a little something to warm up my insides.





MILK

I was standing there stamping the snow off my shoes, and there he was, thin and grey and wrinkled, wearing jeans and an oversized sweater, and sitting sort of vacant-looking over a beer. There weren't many people in the place, so we got to talking, and got around to this story of his by chance; once we were into it, he seemed to need to tell it. I know damned well what you're going to say when you hear it—you're going to say it was a regular scam, a standard joke played on out-of-staters to see if we'd swallow such garbage, and no doubt they all had a good, hearty, Yankee laugh afterwards. Well, actually, I hope to God you're right, because I don't want to believe any of it ever really happened. But the way he told it, and that look he had in his eyes—hell, he was even sweating at the end, and his hands were shaking; they weren't when he started. If it was an act, it was a good one. I wish I could really think that's all it was. Anyhow, just remember, I'm only telling this because you asked. Roger, why don't you put another log on the fire? It's getting cold in here.

I was thawing out my gizzard with a good glass of scotch, and to make idle conversation I had been asking the old man about where he lived in Reeds Ferry. He seemed glad to have somebody to talk to. Funny, we never even asked each other's name, now that I think of it. But I did ask him something else, for no particular reason; it almost makes me believe in fate, because I don't think he'd have brought it up otherwise. But I did ask.

"Have any close neighbors up your way?"

A kind of cloud seemed to pass over his face, and he looked thoughtful for a moment, as if I had jarred loose a flood of memories. He took another sip of his beer and said, "Well, sir, I did have some close neighbors."

"Oh?"

"Ayuh. Judd and Linda Morris, next house down the road. Judd, he was young enough to be my grandson, but we had us some right nice

talks sometimes. Linda, she was a pretty little lady and a good wife for Judd. They hadn't had no children. Way things turned out, I'd say it's just as well."

His use of the past tense aroused my curiosity; sometimes, too, a bit of scotch on an empty stomach will make me a more willing listener. I guess, even to stories that don't start off sounding too interesting. So I asked, "Why? What happened to them?"

He peered out into the storm as if looking for an answer there. All you could see was a streetlamp standing alone in the snow. Without looking back at me, the old man said, "It was somethin' damned strange." In profile, his wrinkled face had an expression that seemed to say: Look—I'm too old and too tired to have to think about this again; but now I guess I'll have to, and maybe I should.

I had a guilty feeling now, unwittingly dragging open some strange old wound, maybe, but before I could say anything he went on.

"Judd Morris was a smart young fellow, had hisself a good job. Him and Linda, they had a good time, goin' on trips together, enjoyin' life. Laughed and joked a lot. They had thei'selves a little family joke about a habit of Judd's."

"What was that?"

"Well, Judd, he loved milk, drunk it like they owned a whole barn full of cows. And he always drunk it with a straw. Said it tasted better that way. He used to say: Look, some grown folks look at cartoons on Saturday-mornin' tv and collect teddy bears and everything else, so what's the matter with drinkin' milk with a straw?"

I had to smile. "What did his wife say about it?"

"Well, she give him a bad time, in a funnin' kind of way, you know. Kept askin' him if he didn't want some chocolate in it, too. Then they'd laugh, and Judd, he'd tell her he'd long since give up all the nice things about childhood, like climbin' trees and playin' with a yoyo, but the straw for his milk would've been one concession too many. Lately he even kept a special straw to use."

"She didn't really mind, then?" I asked, and right away felt that I was foolishly drawing out an unimportant point. Good grief, was I really sitting here and talking about such a thing, with a total stranger? But the old man went on, and it began to seem that maybe he had had a good reason for bringing it up in the first place. There

was some kind of story here, maybe.

"No, hell, Linda didn't mind. Like I said, it was a standin' joke between 'em. She *did* used to mind, though, about not washin' the straw out proper. It was one of them plastic straws with a elbow-joint in it, you know, that you wash and use over. Actually, he'd got it at the hospital when he was in to have his appendix out in August, and kept the straw when he came home, and insisted on usin' it, just to kind of kid Linda, I guess. He sometimes helped with the dishes, and he was in the habit of just runnin' some cold water through the straw and droppin' it in the rack to dry. Now Linda, she'd fuss at him about that—said

Well, we did look in on him regular, and we didn't like the way he looked. Skin looked awful, kind of cheesy white, and puffier than before.

it needed hot soapy water, or the milk in that little kink in the straw'd hang in there and go bad like, and could make a body pretty sick the next time. Besides that, the straw had come from the hospital, and hospitals are terrible places for pickin' up germs and such."

I sipped my scotch and nodded, wondering what all this was leading to, if anything. "Hard to argue with that." I half expected the punch line to some shaggy-dog joke at this point; but the old man's eyes had grown too serious for that. And I remembered that he had spoken of both Judd and Linda in the past tense before.

"Ayuh, she knew what she was talkin' about, all right, only she couldn't have knew the half of it. I

don't think nobody really does know all that can happen when things go spoilt or rotten. I remember one time when I opened up an old root cellar in the basement of a farmhouse, and found an old mason jar of preserves that'd had the wax seal broke. I can tell you, I didn't like the looks of what was growin' in them preserves. And I remember there was a dead chipmunk once, up attic ..."

I got the feeling that he was veering away from his story, maybe reconsidering about wanting to tell it, so I called him back to it. "What happened with Judd and Linda?"

He glanced at me oddly, as if caught in the act of changing the sub-

intestinal trouble, and prescribed him some pills; told Linda to keep him restin' for a day or two and he ought to be fine. Well, Judd stayed in bed for longer than that, and didn't seem to be gettin' no better either. When I looked in on him, his skin was white as chalk, and he was lookin' kind of puffy-like. Doc Blackwood said he was retainin' fluids, and give him a new mess of pills."

Outside, the wind rose even more mournful, and the old man seemed to be picking through his thoughts for the best way to continue. Somehow it made me nervous.

"When Judd had been down sick for about three weeks, Linda got a

side, the storm was getting worse, and now I had a funny kind of crawling sensation in my gut, waiting for the rest of the story.

"Well sir," he finally said, "one evenin' after Linda'd been gone about a week, I went over to look in on Judd, and found all the doors locked. 'Judd! I says, ringin' the bell, 'you there?' No answer. But I could see his shadow movin' on the curtains, and I figured he must be all right if he could get up and go to the toilet and all. I went back home and rung him up, and he answered, and said he was all right and not to bother myself lookin' in on him. But I tell you, mister, I didn't like the way he sounded on that telephone. Kind of thick like, like he was all stuffed up in the nose and throat, but then again not quite like that either. The next day the doors over there was still locked, and when my son-in-law called up, he said Judd sounded strange all right, said you could barely make out what he was sayin'. Well, we let him be, but we was worried now, and the next day when I went over to try to get him to come to the door, I saw—somethin' I don't like to remember."

He lapsed into a troubled silence before going on.

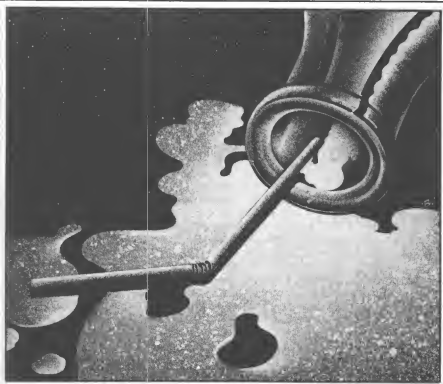
"I hadn't been able to raise Judd any more on the phone at all, and around noon I figured I'd better go over. I got no answer at the front door, so I went home, and a little later I come back and went around to the back. There's a window there next to the door, and when I come 'round, Judd had the curtains open and was lookin' out, not expectin' to see nobody I imagine. Or not expectin' nobody to see him. He quick pulled them curtains shut, but I saw what I saw."

Somehow I was beginning to feel the sort of prickle at the back of my neck that I've always read about. Up until then I didn't know if it ever happened in real life. It does. "What was it you saw?"

The old man shook his head—I thought for a second he meant he wasn't going to tell me—and wiped a lock of hair back off his forehead. His voice was grave now. "It wasn't nothin' I would've thought could be Judd Morris, if I hadn't knew he was the only creature livin' that could be in that house."

I was startled by his choice of words. Had he said "it"?

"You couldn't rightly say it even looked human, even though it did have a shape somethin' like a man,



ject, and dropped his eyes and took another sip of beer. "Well, like I said, somethin' damned strange. I think about it sometimes, nights, tryin' to understand ..."

As his voice trailed off, the wind outside moaned as if to underscore the strangeness of whatever had happened, and the old man was silent for so long that I wondered if he *did* intend to go on. But finally he spoke up.

"Come this past November, Judd took sick, stayed home in bed with a fever, and weak as a kitten. Linda called Doc Blackwood in, from over Bedford way. Doctors don't generally make no house calls, you know, but Doc Blackwood was a friend of the family. He said Judd seemed to have

phone call from out in Ohio; her mom had died. She had to go out for the funeral and to be with her pa. She worried about leavin' Judd alone, but he said he'd be okay, and I assured her me and my daughter and son-in-law'd look in on him, so she went. Well, we did look in on him regular, and we didn't like the way he was lookin'. Skin looked awful, kind of cheesy white, and puffer than before. Doc Blackwood had left on vacation, but sent over a new batch of medicine before he went. Linda called from Ohio every night."

The old man stopped and ordered another beer, and waited till he had it in front of him before going on. I replenished my scotch as well. Out-

MILK

only all bloated like. The face was the worst. I saw some kind of little things floatin' there, like they was bobbin' around in some sort of thick liquid like, and it took me a minute to realize they was teeth. And I caught a whiff of some God-awful stench clear through the closed window."

I put my glass of scotch down, a bit shakily, on the table. "My God." My voice came out hoarse. I could see now he wasn't going to continue unless I prompted him; but I had to hear whatever remained for him to tell. You may find it strange, but I had to believe him—you would have, too.

"What did you do?"

He looked down at the table for a long time, then met my eyes. "What would you do? I pissed my pants and run like a goddamned jackrabbit. When I got in the house I called off the police and told 'em what I saw. The desk sergeant thought I'd had a tad too much to drink, I guess, and said there was a police strike on, and he didn't have nobody to send over anyhow. I called around and couldn't get no doctor or anybody to come out. You know how they are. So then I dug out the number Linda had left with us, and rung her up out in Ohio. She was already in a dither because she hadn't been able to raise Judd on the phone neither, and said she was comin' straight home that afternoon."

The old man paused to collect himself. He was beginning to perspire. I said, "Hey, take it easy, now." It worried me to see the way he looked. In a minute he continued.

"Linda, she got in about five o'clock. My daughter and her husband and me hadn't had no luck gettin' any response out of Judd or gettin' anybody to come out and check on things. We knew he must be powerful sick, but there wasn't nothin' we could do till Linda come up with the key. My son-in-law Brad and me come along with her to the house; Brad made Jill, that's my daughter, stay behind. Linda was shakin' all over and couldn't even get the key in the lock, and Brad opened the door."

The old man paused again and, maddeningly at this point, ordered another beer. I could see that he needed it. I had forgotten about my

scotch, but now I downed the rest of it.

"All the curtains in the house was drawn, remember, so at first when we stepped inside we couldn't see much—and when we did see it, it took us a minute to understand what we was lookin' at. The most disgustin' smell you could ever imagine smuck us full in the face, but what we saw was the worse part. We didn't stand there long lookin'—a couple of seconds was all it took to get Linda screamin' her head off, and me losin' my dinner. Brad, he just stood there frozen-like, I guess. I only saw what was on the floor."

Now I felt a cold drop of sweat trickling down my own collar. I didn't

**While we
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things come
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to where
we stood,
slitherin' flat
in the layer
of white stuff
on the floor.**

ask. I knew that if he had come this far, he was going to finish it.

He took a long pull at his beer, and his eyes grew so glazed that for a second I thought it might have hit him hard enough to close his mouth. Maybe it would have been better if it had. But he did tell the rest of it, taking a raspy breath first.

"All over the livin' room floor, and stretchin' back into the hall one way and back into the kitchen the other, was a coverin' of white slime like, thick and lumpy, like somethin' clabbered and rotten, and smellin' spoilt, so strong you couldn't breathe. It was everywhere, oozin' like, lappin' almost up to our feet where we stood. Like I said, we only stayed a second before I drug Linda back out the front door, and her screamin' somethin' aw-

ful, and we all cut and run. But that was long enough—we all saw the worst part of it all before we run."

Again, I didn't ask. By now I felt a little numb. His voice was cracking now.

"While we was standin' there, two things come s'idin' up close to where we stood, slitherin' flat in the layer of white stuff on the floor. They was kind of like big poached eggs, each of 'em about a foot across, and they was about three feet apart. It took me till later sometime to realize that they was the eyes, lookin' back at us."

"Jesus Gcd." I wiped by brow with my hand.

"Well sir, when the police finally did come, there wasn't nothin on that floor but a dried-up kind of white scum. That house always smelled, even after they fumigated it, till somebody finally burned it down one night. Wasn't us, you understand, but I sure as hell don't blame whoever done it. Anyway, Linda, she kept on screamin' and screamin' like that, and they put her away, out to the state hospital. After a few days there, belowin' and thrashin' about, she died. That was the first of December."

"Heart failure?" I asked. The thought crossed my mind even now that I wouldn't have believed a word of this coming from anybody else; but if you had been there, had seen the old man's face, heard the tone of his voice ...

"Ayuh, heart failure. And there was somethin' else, too. She was about three months pregnant when she died."

"Oh?"

"Ayuh. Evidently Judd was gettin' sick a long while before anybody knew it, includin' him."

"Wh-why do you say that?" Outside, the ululating wind wafted more snow against the window, and I shuddered for more reasons than one, seeing the white pastiness against the panes.

The old man finished his beer at a swallow; his crinkled hands were shaking, and the glass rattled when he set it down.

"A friend of mine knows the lab assistant that was there when they did the autopsy on Linda. They ain't supposed to talk, but you know how it is. What they found in that woman's belly wasn't no normal baby. I can tell you. Fact is, it wasn't no real baby at all. Just more of that thick white stuff like in the house, a cheesy lump like, and startin' to spread all over her insides. It stunk, and I imagine Linda's grave will, too, come spring thaw." ■

WHITLEY STRIEBER:

A MAN FOR ALL TERRORS

Out of childhood horrors, Strieber forges books of fear.

by STANLEY WIATER



Whitley Strieber has that look. Few horror writers have it, and most probably do not consciously want it: the distant, haunted look of a man who dwells in memory—and darkness.

"The world I really live in is one of memory and imagination. Where imagination may be, in fact, a form of memory," Strieber says.

On that level, Ramsey Campbell and Stephen King are perhaps the only other writers working today who can tell you—if you're really listening—how they have witnessed or experienced events far more twisted and frightening than any they have ever set down on paper.

The *Wolfen* (1979), *The Hunger* (1981), *Black Magic* (1982), *The Night Church* (1983), *WarDay* and *Journey Onward* (1984), and *Wolf of Shadows* (1985) have sold in the millions of copies. *WarDay*, which garnered excellent reviews, was a *New York Times* bestseller in both hardcover and paperback, making Strieber one of the few unabashed writers of horror to be both a popular and a critical success. Of course, this success did not happen overnight to Strieber, who was born in San Antonio, Texas, in 1945, and now lives with his wife and young son in New York.

"It only took ten years, seven unpublished novels, and a lot of blood before I sold *The Wolfen*," he notes wryly.

Strieber, who earlier had some experience himself as a production assistant on such films as *The Owl* and *The Pussycat* and *Diary of a Mad*

Housewife, has also seen his first two novels made into major motion pictures—though neither with very satisfying results. Yet in spite of his continuing success with the novel form, Strieber is not sitting back. Last winter his "young adult" novel *Wolf of Shadows* was jointly published by Knopf and the *Sierra Club* to typically rave reviews. His newest novel, in a day-after-tomorrow setting, is called *Nature's End* and was just published in April by Warner Books.

Like his prose style, Strieber is deceptively quiet and unassuming. Yet his imagination is clearly powerful—and subtly ferocious. Although he's very pleasant, it's evident that he is a man who looks deeply—very deeply—into the shadows.

TZ: *WarDay*, which you co-wrote with James W. Kunetka, was taken much more seriously by the media and critical press than if it were "just a best-selling novel" about the probable consequences of a nuclear holocaust. Were you hoping for a clear thought response?"

STRIEBER: Oh, yes! *WarDay* is much more than "a novel." It is living proof that the genre I work in—the horror genre—is, potentially at least, terribly important to this particular era. The book breaks out of form on so many different levels that it's not really correct, I think, to compare it with another novel. It uses fiction for a purpose. It uses fiction to make a point. It's more a potential documentary than it is a novel.

TZ: You certainly broke out of form by having you and collaborator James W. Kunetka appear as the main characters. Why?

STRIEBER: We wanted to make the reader feel that this is real. That what I'm reading is real; it's a documentary. It's not "fiction." And the best way to do that is to be as natural and open as possible. The purpose of us as characters is to add impact and a sense of immediacy to the story.

TZ: Didn't you once intend to follow up with a direct sequel called *WarDay: Europe and Russia*? Is that still forthcoming?

STRIEBER: No. I wrote instead a book called *Nature's End*. It's similar to *WarDay* in that I also wrote it with James Kunetka. It's set fifty years in the future, and it's about the state of the environment then. We wrote most of a *WarDay* sequel from the European and Russian viewpoint, but as far as I know, there is no plan to publish it. I felt *Nature's End* was a more important book, given the pressing environmental concerns that the public seems almost totally unaware of or are unaffected by. And we wanted to go and do that; we may turn back later to *WarDay: Europe and Russia*, but I'm not sure.

TZ: To backtrack for a moment, have you always been interested in writing, and in horror?

STRIEBER: All I did as a kid was read and go to the movies. I was one of those pale wimps who ran around

I WHITLEY STRIEBER

[laughs] ... You've seen them—you were probably one of them, too.

TZ: [laughs] I don't know what you're talking about ...

STRIEBER: ... with a stack of books from the library piled up to your nose. Thin, easily pushed over by bullies. I was much safer in the dark of the movie theater where no one could see me!

TZ: All right, so many of us can relate to that. But how did that eventually lead to your becoming a "horror" writer rather than, say, a romance or mystery or science fiction writer?

STRIEBER: First of all, let me say I recognize genre-ization simply as a marketing tool. I write books that deal with fear. That's what I really do. Not "horror novels," but books that have to do with fear. Stephen King writes books about fear, Peter Straub does. And I do that because I was formed, in my own background, with a life that was filled with arbitrary tragedies. From the age of ten to the age of twenty, it's just a litany of one catastrophe after another in my family.

Beginning with my grandfather's sudden and early death, which really threw the family into a very bad situation. One of my uncles was murdered about a year later. Six months after that, his wife was nearly burned to death and ended up in the hospital for two years—and she had four kids. My father lost his voice to cancer, and we nearly went bankrupt. Our house burnt down. This all happened at about the same time, and it was like some dark force coming in just striking us, again and again and again.

The culmination of this whole thing, as far as I was concerned, was when I ended up a student at the University of Texas at the same time as Charles Whitman. And I found myself hiding behind this small retaining wall, and he had shot two women not far from where I was hiding. He had shot them in the stomach and they were in agony. Screaming. Begging for help. And a fellow beside me behind this retaining wall went out and Whitman blew the top of his head off. Another man came out from behind a tree and was shot in the face and

killed. And I realized then that those two girls had been shot that way to attract people to them, and he was waiting up there to kill off anyone who came to help them. And I stayed behind that wall and listened to them ... wind down ... get silent. It took me a long time to come to terms with that.

But the culmination of all of this was, I'm very close to fear, and I don't feel at all safe in the universe. I feel like it can come ... it can come out after you at any time, at any moment. There's really no line at all between life and catastrophe. That's why, I guess, the horror in my books is so common.

TZ: We know your novels are often as well-received by the critics as they are the public. But why should horror novels, or "novels about fear" to use your phrase, be considered in any way worthwhile as "literature"?

STRIEBER: What horror writing is about, in my opinion, is this journey through the netherworld. We all come from somewhere, and we're all going somewhere—and we don't know where. And we're all frightened. Everyone of us, in nightmares, has lived through this fear. Now, someone with a uniquely terrible series of experiences like I've had maybe has a special relationship with fear. But most people walking the street have had the Ultimate Fear. I certainly don't know anyone who can't look back on a nightmare, and even if it didn't make much sense, it still drew them to a level of ultimate terror. So we all know what it's about. We all know what the terror is.

Horror novels are important because they help us deal with this. "Mainstream" novels are generally a type of moral fiction that are about the consciousness of everyday life. Horror novels are about the inner consciousness; about extending consciousness into the dark places of the soul. The novelist is a guide through the netherworld, and in a good horror novel, the reader is the hero of the journey. Not he main characters who are acted upon by the disasters. Stephen King, for example: his best characters are always his victims. When you read his books, you find yourself literally the hero of the story in the sense that he is guiding you from event to event, deeper and deeper into this netherworld.

And guiding you out again, too.

There are some sonofabitches who leave you dangling in the darkness; [laughs] people who really don't know what they're doing, or who are just out for a "kick." The old "hacker" and scare "em" deal. I'm not interested in that. I'm interested in horror fiction as a serious fictional form.

TZ: Certainly WarDay deals very effectively with the Ultimate Fear facing all of mankind—annihilation by nuclear war.

STRIEBER: It takes the moment the farthest it's ever gone—I don't think there's ever been a horror novel as vitally connected to the issues and the reality of terror in our time. Horror fiction is uniquely capable of dealing with the real nightmares of this period; there isn't another form that is capable of doing it. If we're going to learn to be able to grapple consciously with these terrors, it's going to be through the medium of horror fiction.

TZ: You once said that you don't consider your concept truly completed until it exists as both a book and a film.

STRIEBER: Yes, that's right. I don't write consciously that way, that's just the way it comes out of me, in such a way that the translation from novel into film is a very natural one. There's a film waiting to be made out of *The Night Church*. The only book I've ever written that doesn't necessarily have a film in it is *Black Magic*, and that was because I sort of went off on a spy tangent, and it's a little too complicated a plot. But there's a terrific movie in *The Night Church*.

TZ: Then what did you think of the film versions of *The Wolfen* and *The Hunger*?

STRIEBER: They were both overblown; they were both done by people who thought the horror genre was simply a vehicle, and they were trying to do things that were more "important" than horror. In *Wolfen*, the director was interested in making a political statement. In *The Hunger*, the director was interested in making an "art" film. Someone who had been at a party in London told me that [director Tony] Scott had said, "The Hunger is not a horror film, it's an art film." And I thought, "It's a bomb. It's doomed." But if the directors had just been honest ... it was the same way with the second version of *Cat People*, and *Ghost Story*

was the same deal—the directors don't have any respect for the little man. Either the little man who made the pictures which are going to live forever, or the little man who watched them and went away feeling somehow a kind of catharsis in himself for having been there.

TZ: *Knowing your intense interest—and experience—in filmmaking, it must be frustrating to see what's become, or not become, of your work when it's adapted for the screen.*

STRIEBER: You know, I'm not that interested in selling my novels to the studios right now. Primarily because so many books made into movies have failed in recent years. Most of Stephen King's have. And they've failed for a number of different reasons, not the least of which is they haven't been well done! If I strike up a relationship with the right film person, I will go back into making films of my work. But I'm just not going to sell them to the studios. I'm not interested in that anymore.

TZ: *Speaking of catharsis, is that what the process of writing horror is to you—a way of purging all the horror you've experienced in real life?*

STRIEBER: Oh, definitely!!

TZ: *What's your writing schedule like?*

STRIEBER: I use a word processor. I start work usually at eight-thirty in the morning and work until six, with a half hour off for lunch. I work five, maybe six days a week, maybe seven days a week depending on how intensive a schedule it is. While I'm writing one book, there's usually two or three other ideas I'm working on in the back of my mind. It takes me anywhere from a year to ten years for a book to gestate in my mind, but only about nine months a year to write it. By the time I'm writing it, the book's usually been written and rewritten ten times in my head! And then I usually go between three and ten drafts of a book.

TZ: *Considering how grim or at least grisly the subject matter of most of your work has been, what does give you satisfaction as a writer?*

STRIEBER: The whole experience gives me satisfaction. Ultimately, the writing of the book, the successful reception of the book by readers, and the filming of the book—that's the whole process. But if the book doesn't sell, and the readers don't

respond, then I feel like I've failed. Because the reader is as important as the writer in the creative mix. The reader is also a creator, a partner, and if you don't have a partnership, then you've failed somehow; you haven't done it right.

I've always longed, naturally, for a bigger and bigger readership, and it is getting to be quite a big readership actually, but I always feel that there could have been another half million readers for a particular book. So I'm never satisfied with what I've got. I want more! [laughs] And it's up to me to get them. I'll get those readers, if I deserve them.

We all come from somewhere, and we're all going somewhere—and we don't know where. We're all frightened.

TZ: *Is that part of what drives you?*

STRIEBER: My work is a great joy. I wouldn't be able to tell you exactly what it is that drives me, but I have lots of ideas. I have hundreds of ideas, and they're just stacked up in a holding pattern. I've got ten novel ideas that I really would like to do, and I can't get to them all! I write like a madman, I write as fast as I can, and I still can't get to them all. By the time I'm finished with one thing, I have five additional ideas, and then I'll have two more ideas, for a total of seven ideas...!

TZ: *Many of your fans have a special affection for your first novel, The Wolfen. We understand you're considering a sequel?*

STRIEBER: Yes. It'll be called *Call of the Wolfen*, though I'm not working on it right now.

TZ: *Tell us about your "young adult"*

novel called Wolf of Shadows. It's also gaining the attention in political circles that WarDay received in terms of its being taken as more than just another novel.

STRIEBER: Yes, it's doing quite well, though since it's a young adult novel it won't be a bestseller or anything. It's a little allegory about a nuclear war that is so severe that a "nuclear-winter" sets in. And it's about a pack of wolves and a young woman and her daughter, who achieve a symbiosis and begin to support one another to be able to survive. Allegorically, it's saying that we must reintroduce ourselves to nature. We are coming up against so many problems: excessive population growth in the world; use of resources spewing all sorts of things into the atmosphere, sitting on top of these huge arsenals, the probability that nuclear weapons will go into the Third World and into the hands of terrible, demented people very soon.

To fix these things we've got to understand a lot more about ourselves than we do. *WarDay* and other such fictions are becoming essential to our survival. They're much more important than they were in the past. Because we're running out of time.

TZ: *If WarDay was intended as a direct warning to its adult readers regarding nuclear destruction, would it be fair to say that Wolf of Shadows was meant as a parallel warning which children could easily grasp?*

STRIEBER: Very definitely, yes.

TZ: *Traditional last question: what's next on the dark horizon of Whitely Strieber?*

STRIEBER: Another novel, which will probably be out next spring. All I can say about it is I think of it as my big "breakthrough" novel. Much bigger a breakthrough to the horror genre than *The Wolfen* or *The Hunger* were. I'm very excited about it; I think it's the best thing I've ever done. I just finished it today. The title of it is *The Wild*. And it takes some of the oldest horror traditions, and it makes them into something completely new.

[Eds.' note: Since this interview, Strieber has decided to put *The Wild* aside. He explains: "I just felt it wasn't as good as I first thought it was, so I put it away." He is currently at work on a nonfiction book, but, he says, "It's just too early to talk about that now.")

ALIENS

Survival of the shiftest—on the planet Acheron.

by JAMES VERNIERE

Perhaps the only thing more daunting than making a sequel to (or more correctly a "continuation of") an acclaimed genre film is trying to follow up an acclaimed genre film. All of which makes writer-director James Cameron a truly dauntless fellow. Cameron, whose previous feature film was the critical and popular 1984 hit, *The Terminator*, has just put the finishing touches on *Aliens*, a continuation of Ridley Scott's highly lauded popular 1979 film, *Alien*. To say that Cameron, who wrote the screenplay for *Aliens*, has a right to feel set up to take a fall would be an understatement.

Although there is a tight lid on the plot of Cameron's new film, a few tidbits have been offered. Described by the studio's production notes as "a high tension suspense/thriller," *Aliens* will once again feature Sigourney Weaver as Warrant Officer Ripley, the sole survivor of the spaceship *Nostromo*'s encounter with a deadly, shape-shifting extraterrestrial.

Cameron has been quoted as saying that *Alien* ranks as one of his favorite films. "I like it for the same reasons most people do. I like it for its extreme stylistic approach, its treatment of character, its heightened reality. It was a science fiction exploration

of a kind of collective id."

Alien, for the uninitiated, is a modern classic, a science fiction/horror film hybrid that took its cue from fifties films like *The Thing* (1951) and *It! The Terror From Beyond Space* (1958) but turned out to be something completely different. Based on an original story by Dan (Dark Star, Return of the Living Dead) O'Bannon, *Alien* was on one level a nightmarish voyage to the outer reaches of xenophobia. On another level, it was a cunningly designed exercise in torture, seduction, and self-loathing that used every trick in the book—including subliminal sound, flashing lights, blaring sirens, and sado-masochistic imagery—to create what can only be called a cacophony of brain-rattling horror. The film is a hellish experience that ends appropriately in a blast of fire and brimstone.

The Terminator, on the other hand, promised to be just another psycho killer film, albeit with a science fiction twist. Instead, it turned out to be a very provocative piece of filmmaking. Part *Road Warrior*, part *Halloween*, and part 1984, *The Terminator*, which was co-written by Cameron (who also co-wrote *Rambo*), went at least one step beyond most contemporary sf films. It wedded a subtex-

tual political theme about the ruling class's ability to rewrite history to hair-raising genre film action.

But the centerpiece of the film was the Terminator himself. In the form of Conan star and body-building champion, Arnold Schwarzenegger, he was a time-twisted metaphor—a Nazi/Cyborg from the superindustrial future designed, programmed, and unleashed to wreak havoc in the present. If a facile connection can be made between the Terminator, Mad Max, and the masked murderer of *Halloween*, then even more telling (given the fact that Cameron also did the *First Blood* sequel) is the evolutionary link between America's favorite super-macho icons: Rocky (especially as he appears in *Rocky IV*), Rambo, and the Terminator. (Keep in mind that Schwarzenegger went on to play a Rambo-clone in *Commando*.) All single-minded fighting machines out to get what they want at whatever price, this infernal trio has captured the hearts and minds of America's hero-worshipping youth.

Frustrated by the Vietnam experience, filmmakers have rejected the "beautiful losers" of the sixties in favor of "winners in the eighties," even ugly storm troopers like the
(continued on page 52)



Upper: Alien "face huggers" hang in stasis tubes, presenting (clockwise from lower left) Gorman (William Hope), Bishop (Lance Henriksen), Burke (Paul Reiser), and Hicks (Michael Blehn) with a bizarre riddle.

Lower: Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) works with the Power Loader on the Sulaco.

MOVIE

Preview

MOVIE

Preview

Upper: The row of capsules in the Sulaco's Hypersleep vault containing Ripley (Weaver), Burke (Reiser), and troopers of the US Colonial Marine Corps.

Lower: Having found herself trapped in Alien territory, Ripley (Weaver) struggles to escape—and rescue Newt (Carrie Henn), too.



(continued from page 50)

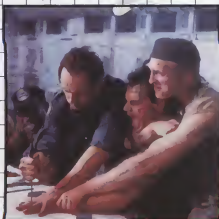
Terminator. It's a truly frightening comment on current American culture, especially since the sexually voracious, rampantly reproductive Alien itself is arguably the descendant of this ass-kicking, homo-erotic threesome—an outerspace Nazi.

In *The Terminator*, Cameron, with the help of co-screenwriter and producer Gale Anne Hurd, managed not only to concoct a futuristic parable, but also to tap into anti-social reserves of anger and frustration.

Can Cameron pull off another coup with *Aliens*, saddled with a set of characters and a plot he did not originate? Well, he already did just that when he turned the sequel to *First Blood* into what some have called *The Terminator Goes to Vietnam*.

What's more, Cameron admits that he's taken some liberties with Dan O'Bannon's original vision. For one, *Aliens* will not be set exclusively within the claustrophobic confines of a single spacecraft. Instead, most of the action will take place on the inhospitable planet, Acheron (the name of a river in the Hades of Greek myth), home to both a human outpost and an Alien structure containing a labyrinth of chambers and catacombs. Cameron has also added more human protagonists and Alien creatures.

(continued on page 55)



Upper Left: Sigourney Weaver takes time out to play with a terrestrial creature.

Upper Right: The US Colonial Marine Corps members make a point. Bishop (Lance Henriksen) wields the ice pick.

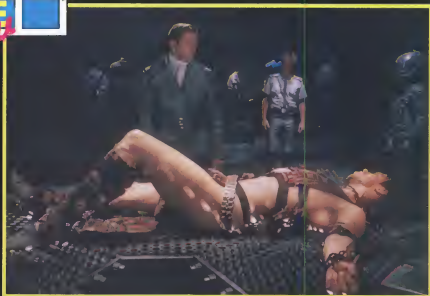
Lower: Preparations take place in the Sulaco's cargo hold as the US Colonial Marine Corps get ready for Alien climbs on the orbit-to-surface craft, the Drop Ship.



MOVIE

Preview

*In a futuristic inferno,
Solarbabies skate
for freedom.*



SOLAR

B A B I E S



Top: Strictor Grock (Richard Jordan) and his protegee Gavial (Peter Kowanko) supervises the torture of Tchigani chief Ivor (Terrence Mann).

Opposite page: Strictor Grock (Jordan) torments Gavial (Kowanko) in the psychiatric chamber of terrors.

Left: The Solarbabies bask in the otherworldly glow of a publicity shot. (left to right) Rabbitt (Claude Brooks), Tug (Peter DeLuise), Terra (Jami Gertz), Daniel (Lukas Haas), Jason (Jason Patric), and Matron (James Le Gros).

"It's not *Gremlins*, it's not *Goonies*, it's not *Explorers*," says Irene Walzer, associate producer of Brooksfilm's *Solarbabies*. "It's unique."

Set in a world without water—and shot, appropriately, in the Spanish desert—*Solarbabies* tells the story of a group of teenage skateboard players and their rebellion against a totalitarian government that sounds, curiously, like the Los Angeles Water Department. In this vision by Walon Green and Douglas Metrov, he who controls water controls the world, and the Protectorate has cornered every drop.

Enter the *Solarbabies*, a skate-ball team that does battle with the Scorpions—and the dictatorship at large. The stars Jaml Gertz (*Mischief*, *Alphabet City*), Lukas Hass (*Witness*), James Le Gros (*Violated*, *Insiders*), Peter DeLulse (*Free Ride*), Claude Brooks (*Guiding Light*, *Ryan's Hope*), Jason Patric (*Tough Love*), and Peter Kowanko (*Sylvester*) took



lessons from veteran Spanish roller hockey stars and endured one hundred-degree temperatures to create skateball—a wild mixture of hockey, lacrosse, and street gang warfare.

Solarbabies' director, Alan Johnson, a widely respected choreographer, is perhaps best known for the world's most absurd production number, "Springtime for Hitler," in Mel Brooks's *The Producers*. Before directing the Brooksfilm *To Be Or Not To Be*, Johnson worked with Brooks on *Blazing Saddles*, *Young Frankenstein*, *High Anxiety*, and *History of the World, Part I*.

Of his transition from the dance step to the cutting room, Johnson says, "It's a natural progression from choreography to direction. You do the same things, make the same decisions for a dance number as for a film. The creative urge is the same."

Even, one assumes, if the medium is solar energy.

—MB

ALIENS

(continued from page 53)

Cameron contends, "Calling it a continuation is hairsplitting in one sense. In another, it's positive and healthy because for many people sequel means re-make, a recapitulation of some other story, following virtually the same formulaic structure. We go into a completely different realm both stylistically and narratively. It does, however, have a similar heightened sense of moment-to-moment reality, and it has the claustrophobia. But the canvas is a bit larger. I think what audiences will remember is a sense of exhilaration at the action. I would compare it more to *The Terminator*, which is where I learned a lot about action, than to the original film. Among other things, the film will explore the idea of what heroism really is under extremely stressful circumstances. The special effects and the gadgets are entirely in the service of the story."

Gale Ann Hurd, the producer of *Aliens*, offers some insight into the film's plot when she describes *Aliens* as "very much a combat film... a combat film with lots of action and an unseen enemy."

All this may lead one to suspect that Cameron is once again exploring the damage Vietnam inflicted on the American psyche, using Acheron with its honeycomb of Alien-infested tunnels as a science fiction stand-in for Southeast Asia. But Cameron insists, "My writing on *Rambo* did not explore any political or sociological issues. I was primarily concerned with character. The bias in that film is Stallone's. *Aliens* is more reflective of my writing. Its primary concern is character and behavior, especially under extreme conditions. I may have described the plot once as having Vietnam-like situations, and I think that might be there. But I'm a Canadian, and my experience of Vietnam was watching the six o'clock news and having a few draft-dodger acquaintances. I am, however, fascinated by the idea of a highly technological war being fought against a relatively primitive people who win. There is a bit of that. *The Forever War* (by Joe Haldeman) is one of a number of novels and short stories that present soldiers in outer space. But it's never really been done in the movies. The imperial storm troopers in the *Star Wars* films don't really qualify. In fact,

Grunts in Space is how I first pitched my script to the studio."

Cameron also makes some neat distinctions between the Terminator and the Alien: "I saw the Terminator, as an entity, as a sort of death figure, a personification of the implacability of death. The Alien I see a little differently, as a mindless, chaotic life urge that's out of control. The two are similar, but they're also different. The Terminator was cold. He had a kind of razor-blade mind. We couldn't relate to him. Whereas the Alien we can relate to because he's basically trying to survive. He's the purest expression of the will to survive. I think we have to dig down to dredge up any sympathy because the Alien has no real consciousness. But it's there."

And even with the success of the original and the overlapping of some of the first film's production team, he was not particularly pressured to retain the previous film's structure or style. "So many years have intervened, longer than what one would consider viable for a sequel, and so many other films have copycatted *Alien* in one way or another, that it was a lot easier for me to sell the idea that *Aliens* should be completely new, both stylistically and in terms of content."

Walter Hill will return as an executive producer. *Alien* veteran, Ron Cobb, is also back again in his capacity as a conceptual artist, together with Syd Mead (perhaps best known for his contribution to Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*), and production designer, Peter (Octopussy, *A View to a Kill*) Lamont. But this time around the special make-up effects—an integral part of the impact of the original film—will be handled by Stan (*The Thing*, *Starman*) Winston, who worked with Cameron on *The Terminator*.

As most genre film buffs know, the innovative and frighteningly effective appearance of the creature in *Alien* was based on designs by Swiss surrealist artist, H. R. Giger, whose biomechanical style is nothing if not unique. And his influence is still felt.

"The ghost of Giger is with us," says Cameron good-naturedly.

As anyone who reads these film previews understands, it's almost impossible to say how a film—sight unseen—will turn out. But in light of James Cameron's previous work and his own words about his new film, I'll place my bets on *Aliens*. Cynics may argue, as they almost always do in the case of a sequel (or whatever you call it), that once was enough. But I have a sneaking suspicion that we're in for some wonderful and nasty surprises. Chestbursters, anyone?

CHET WILLIAMSON

From a Twilight Zone tale of an office's inhumanity to man to a New Yorker fantasy of Gandhi at the bat: the rapid rise of Chet Williamson.



It's presumptuous, we know, but we like to think of Chet Williamson as a TZ discovery. After all, shortly after Twilight Zone published his first story, "Offices," in its October 1981 issue, he began placing stories in magazines like Playboy and the New Yorker. Then last spring, he landed a two-novel contract with Tor. They are publishing his first novel, *Soul Storm*, this August and his second, *Ash Wednesday*, some time next year.

Of course, we also realize that Williamson himself deserves some credit. Although he began writing fiction only seven years ago, he has already completed three novels and is currently revising two more. Yet he is remarkably modest about his achievements. He laughs with self-effacing good humor when he describes how he began writing and sounds somehow still surprised when he explains how he broke in.

TZ: Shortly after you sold your first story to TZ, you wrote, "I had wanted to be a writer for a long time. The problem was, I didn't want to write."

That's a problem that probably plagues a lot of people. How did you solve it?

Williamson: I was acting and then writing industrial shows—musicals that big companies like Armstrong put on for wholesalers and retailers. And that was the first time I really started writing. I had not written any fiction

until then. Oh, a couple of little aborted attempts, but nothing seriously. And then I found myself writing this stuff full-time, and I thought, "Gee, this writing is not bad. I wonder what it would be like to write something seriously?"

So around 1979 or 1980, I said, "All right, let's just write a page a day. Doesn't matter if it's bad, doesn't matter if it's good, doesn't matter what it is—you'll write a page a day. So I started going over to the library on my lunch hour and wrote a page a day. And by God, by the end of the year, I had 365 pages. So the next year I decided I would do two pages a day, which came to—what?—730 pages? And I found that some of it was saleable. Some of it sold. So once the discipline was established, I found that I was a writer, in that I was writing every day and turning out, occasionally, decent material. It was just the discipline of doing it that did it.

TZ: Were your first efforts all short stories?

Williamson: Yes, and it was maddening, because when I was finishing one up I knew that the next day I had to start another, and there had to be an idea there. So some of the stories were pretty awful because I did not have good ideas when I started. Maybe some of the ideas could be reworked, but the treatments were dreadful.

TZ: Where did you get those ideas?

Williamson: I was just reading an interview with the two guys who wrote *Inherit the Wind*, and they said, "Write about things that annoy you. That's where you get your ideas." That's a little didactic, but I think that's how I first started, because "Offices" came from my own dissatisfaction with working in an office—the idea that "My God, these people are stealing my soul!"

TZ: Do you feel you are working in any particular tradition?

Williamson: There are certain genres I like. For me, the epitome of fantasy is a well-told ghost story. I think it's the thing that lies closest to our real fears. For example, I could never be afraid of a vampire, although I've read some very effective vampire stories. But there isn't that fear there that there is in a ghost—in one's own death. It's just the prime subject, as far as I'm concerned. And because of that, certain works stand out more for me than certain writers. Like the haunted house story, which is dear to my heart because *Soul Storm* is a haunted house story.

Of course, I was very affected by Lovecraft, although I don't think I've ever written anything Lovecraftian. Poe, I've always loved, and M. R. James. As far as the classic ghost story writer, he's the best, just the best. And Robert Bloch. I have always

liked Robert Bloch because of that clean, plain style of his. He just knows how to tell a story so well.

TZ: You have a clean, plain style, too.

Williamson: Well, if I hit a line that makes me stop and go, "Ooh, that's a nice piece of writing," I generally discover that I ought to cut it. Who was it that said, "Murder your darlings"? I've written an awful lot of darlings that haven't been murdered.

TZ: It is hard to do.

Williamson: Yes, because you say, "Now is this line really good, or is it self-conscious?" So if I suspect it, I try to destroy it.

TZ: How did you know that you finally had a story worth submitting?

Williamson: I don't know. That really gets kind of nebulous. "Offices" was maybe about the twenty-fifth story I had written. And again, of the other twenty-four, there may be a few that could be mined, but most were not very good. They were too derivative ... or just plain dumb. But, the more you write, the more you begin to think, "Hey, this is a lot better than the one I did before." And finally it gets to the point when you think, "Hmm, this might be good enough to sell."

TZ: Not too long after placing your first story in TZ you also published in Playboy and the New Yorker. How did you get into them?

Williamson: I guess I sold to Playboy first. It was a case of feeling out the market, which is what my agent does now. I knew that Ted Klein knew Playboy's fiction editor, Alice Turner. So I didn't really send a cover letter, but a little sheet listing the people I had sold to, including TZ. So I did get read by Alice, whereas if I had just sent it into the slush, a reader might have read it and that would have been the end of it. But the New Yorker was just a straight slush pile thing. I wrote this whacky thing [about Mahatma Gandhi playing baseball] and I thought, "Well, this is funny. Where in God's name am I going to send it?" Then I remembered that Roger Angell is an editor over there. He's a wonderful baseball writer and, of course, a huge baseball fan. So I sent it to his attention.

TZ: That was clever, because then it didn't really sink into their fiction slush.

Williamson: Well, it was slush, but the right slush. I sent the thing in on a Monday and Thursday he called. He talked to my wife because I was at work, and when I came home, there were balloons and streamers in the mailbox. I knew something had happened.

TZ: Did you have any trouble going from short stories to novels?

Williamson: I started *Soul Storm* in '81, shortly after I sold my first couple stories, and it was a bit daunting. I didn't know anything about writing a novel, or about writing anything that long. But it just sort of seemed to roll. Now, it's gotten to the point that I like writing novels a lot more than I do short stories. I can be much more relaxed because I know I can give myself six months or however long it takes to finish it. And it's much easier to come up with an idea every six

Who was it that said, "Murder your darlings"?

months and develop it. I find, too, that I love characterization. And characterization in novels can be so much more developed than it can in short stories. You have so much more room to work with.

TZ: For you, then, writing a novel is a relief.

Williamson: Yes, it is. When I'm writing a novel, and I'm half way through and go in and sit at the word processor, it's like coming back to old friends. With a short story, it's like jumping into the lion's den. You know, "Finish this, and do it right, or we'll kill you."

TZ: But how did you go from magazine sales to a two-novel contract?

Williamson: I got an agent. I had tried to market the first book on my own, and I just didn't know what to do with it. As a result, it didn't go

anywhere. I would send queries out, you know, little things saying, "Hey, I have this. Would you be interested in seeing it?" And everyone wrote back, "No, no, no. Go away." So I talked to Lloyd Arthur Eshbach—one of the giants in old time sf, who lives in this area—I mean, gee, the fellow who started Fantasy Press back in the forties and published stuff in *Amazing* and *Astounding* in the thirties. He knew I was writing and wasn't having any luck selling, and he said, "Well, why don't you send one to my agent, and I'll write you a little letter of introduction?" So I did, and it was Jim Allen, who works for Virginia Kidd. He loved the first book, and said, "Heck, yeah. I'll take you on." Of course, he had to send it around to a few places, but it got bought.

TZ: So you're a firm believer in getting an agent?

Williamson: From my experience trying to do it on my own, I would hate trying to sell a novel without an agent. It can be done, and it has been done. I mean, there are a lot of people, like Asimov, who still don't have agents today. But I've found that it's really nice to have one. And he handles all my shorts as well.

TZ: At what point did you begin writing full-time?

Williamson: With the sale of the two books, last spring. But I still do freelance advertising work for the company I worked for before. [laughs] So, it's sort of like going in there and painting the Sistine Chapel, and Pope Julius gives you a little money to live on.

TZ: Are you really sanctifying advertising?

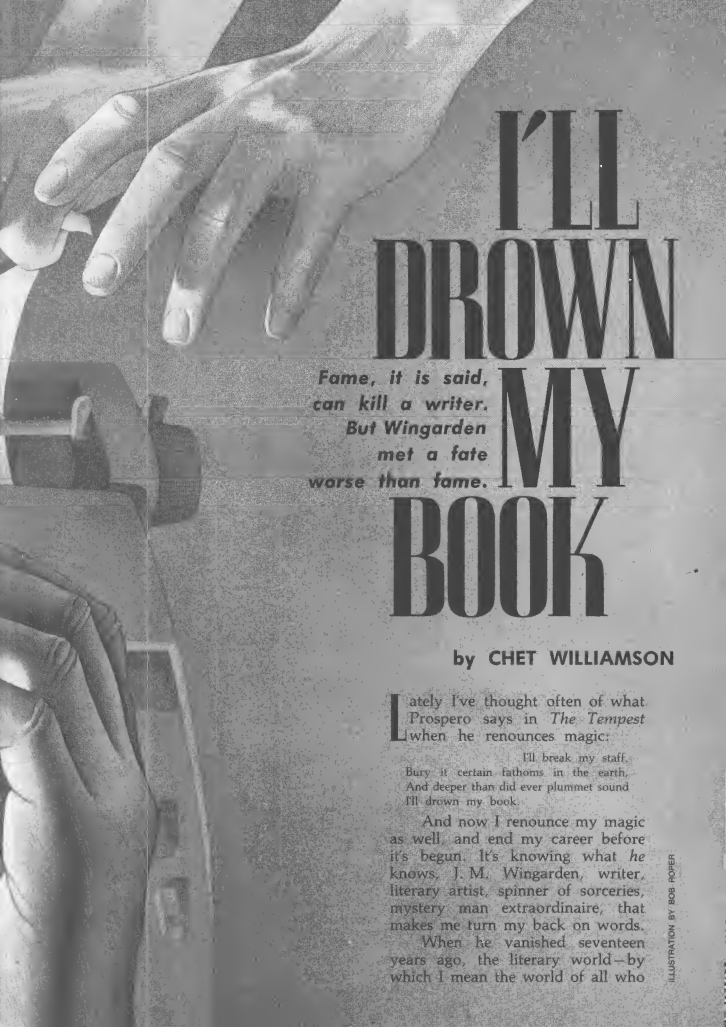
Williamson: No, not really. But it did teach me discipline, something I needed at the time.

TZ: How has freelancing worked out so far?

Williamson: There are a lot of distractions at home, but in truth, I work a lot more intensely than I did when I worked for the company. Being your own boss is nice, but I'm also a much tougher boss than most bosses I've had. I've got to be. Otherwise, I'd just "piddle away my time. And I've done that, too. But the freedom is great. And there is something to be said for not having to put on a tie. I love it.

—RB





I'LL DROWN MY BOOK

*Fame, it is said,
can kill a writer.
But Wingarden
met a fate
worse than fame.*

by CHET WILLIAMSON

Lately I've thought often of what Prospero says in *The Tempest* when he renounces magic:

I'll break my staff,
Bury it, with fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

And now I renounce my magic as well, and end my career before it's begun. It's knowing what *he* knows, J. M. Wingarden, writer, literary artist, spinner of sorceries, mystery man extraordinaire, that makes me turn my back on words.

When he vanished seventeen years ago, the literary world—by which I mean the world of all who

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read—was shaken. He had been prominent for only a year, yet in that time there had appeared two novels that some consider the finest in the language. *In the Shadows* brilliantly examined in less than two hundred pages the dark soul of twentieth-century man, and *Over the Border* screamed a warning to civilization with searing sanity. The books were praised, bought, read, and shivered at, then read again. And the name of J. M. Wingarden became universally known.

Then, as suddenly as his star had gone into nova, he became a black hole. J. M. Wingarden vanished utterly. Whether he died or dropped voluntarily from sight no one knew, but the latter was the guess of most of the *literati*, as his books were never reprinted, despite the staggering demand. Only contractual machinations by the author himself, went the reasoning, could have produced the situation, for the publishers were reputedly livid at having to suppress the books.

So J. M. Wingarden disappeared, but the mystery remained, greater than that surrounding all the other literary riddles of our time: Traven, Salinger, Pynchon. At least we have the works, if not the men. But Wingarden became more than a riddle. He became an enigmatic legend, the Sphinx of Letters.

He called me on the telephone three months ago. I thought it was a joke, but the voice sounded so sincere, so unfailingly *right*, that I believed him within a few sentences. He said:

"Mr. McPeel, this is J. M. Wingarden."

The voice was heavy, rich with something beyond years. I didn't answer.

"The writer. I wrote *In the Shadows* and ..."

"Yes," I interrupted. "I know you." I had to add, "If this isn't a joke."

"No," he said. "It's not a joke. I'm alive." I hadn't suggested otherwise, so the comment seemed odd to me. "I would like to give an interview."

"An ... interview?" I could barely speak.

"Yes. Do you think it would be profitable for you? I mean to say, do you think you could get it published?"

Could I get it published? Only in every damn magazine in the country.

"That would be no problem at all, sir."

"Are you certain? It's very important to me that it be disseminated as widely as possible."

"I can guarantee that, Mr. Wingarden." My mind raced as I thought of possible markets. "But why have you decided to grant an interview after so many years?"

"I'll explain that when we meet. That is, if you want to do it?"

"Oh, yes sir, definitely." In another second I would have crawled into the mouthpiece. I wanted to get the details—where and when—quickly,

dozen stories and articles, my three paperback originals—all that was nothing. From now on I would be known as the man who found J. M. Wingarden, and when I thought of the doors that would open, I felt giddy.

I cancelled the interviews I'd scheduled with some potters for an *Art News* article, dug out my copies of *In the Shadows* and *Over the Border*, and reread them twice that weekend. On Monday I hit the New York Public, went through the 1968-69 *Reader's Guide* and *Book Review Digest*, and O.D.'d on Wingardenian microfiche.

Then, as suddenly as his star had gone into nova, Wingarden became a black hole. He vanished utterly.



as I had this irrational fear that at any second he'd say *very well*, hang up, and disappear again. But instead he told me where he lived and how to get there (I scribbled the directions frantically), gave me his phone number (listed under "Johnson, M."), and asked me if the following Thursday would be all right. I said it would, and he quickly hung up, as if unused to human contact.

My heart was literally pounding as a dozen questions sprang to mind: Was he planning a comeback? Was there a new novel or at least a plan to reprint the first two? And why me, for God's sake? Why not Urdike or Fowles or Mailer or a hundred other writers who would have tossed their paperback rights onto a pile of flaming film options just to sit at the feet of J. M. Wingarden?

It didn't matter. All that mattered was that I was going to do it. My few

Tuesday held more of the same, and by that evening I figured I knew as much (or as little) about J. M. Wingarden as anyone except the man himself.

I got my notepads, tapes, and clothes packed and took a flight to Philly the next morning. From there, a rattly commuter jerked me to Lancaster. I rented a car, found a Holiday Inn, and called Wingarden to make sure everything was still go. It was, but he didn't seem talkative, and I hoped his reticence wouldn't carry over into the interview.

The following day I drove south-east to a small town named Quarryville, and another mile east to Wingarden's farmhouse. My mentioning this is no breach of confidentiality. It makes no difference now. The house was large and boxy, set far back from the two-lane. A weathered barn and several smaller outbuildings surrounded it

on three sides. Though the grounds seemed well kept, the paint on the house was chipped, and a large limb lay untouched at the base of a huge elm in the front yard.

It took several minutes for him to answer the door after I knocked. At first I thought he was a servant in his checked wool shirt and worn poplin trousers, and his apparent age also fooled me. The dust-jacket photo taken seventeen years earlier showed a man in his late thirties, an unlined face beneath a cap of dark, curly hair. But this man appeared to be at least seven-

and took out my notepads, but he held up a hand.

"No notes, please. You may use the recorder, but I ask that after the tape is transcribed you destroy it without making a copy."

I agreed, turned on the recorder, and began.

"May I ask you a personal question first? How did you come to choose me to interview you?"

"I called Dan Rhodes and he suggested you. Said you were a good writer. And an honest one."

I nodded. Dan was my agent.



ty. A light halo of white hair fringed a mottled scalp, and the lines in his face were scarred with far more than fifty-five years of frowns. He didn't smile. That whole day I never saw him smile.

He introduced himself and invited me in. There was a large bookcase in the foyer, and in the dim light I could see that it was packed with multiple copies of his two novels. The books were in varying conditions, and there seemed to be no semblance of order in the way they were arranged on the shelves.

Wingarden led me into a room on the left, a den with a lounge, a large color tv, a couch, and a coffee table. There was no desk in the room. The walls were lined with bookshelves, all packed solid with only two titles—*In the Shadows* and *Over the Border*. He sat in the lounge, and I on the couch. I put the tape recorder on the table

He'd handled Wingarden at the beginning of his career, but I hadn't made the connection before. "I couldn't help but notice," I went on, "that your bookshelves are filled with your own work."

"I don't read anyone else," he said coldly. "I can't concentrate long enough."

I didn't want him hostile and made a mental note to come back to the subject later. "How long have you lived here?"

"Seventeen years. Ever since I dropped from sight. I have a large garden out back that keeps me busy."

"Do you still write?"

He shook his head. "I never write. The money I made from the books has been enough to get me by. I bought real estate with it years ago, invested. I live on interest."

"Why did you stop writing? Why disappear?"

He sat quietly for a moment, then weakly waved the question away. I decided to go back to the books. There wasn't that much else to ask. "Why have you collected all these copies of your work?"

"I needed them." He said it and stopped, as though it were enough, but it wasn't, and I looked at him and waited. He sat uncomfortably, then added, "I couldn't destroy them. I'd worked too hard on them to do that."

I scanned the shelves. "You know, you've got a tidy fortune here. Your books are fetching high prices in the out-of-print market."

He nodded. "That's become a problem to me."

"How so?"

"I've been buying up copies ever since I dropped from sight. The book dealers I work through think I'm one of them—M. Johnson. But, as you say, the prices have accelerated tremendously, and it's becoming more difficult for me to buy them."

I didn't understand. He didn't seem a megalomaniac, or even a grand eccentric.

He stood up. "Come with me. I want to show you the house."

I switched off the recorder and followed him, while he barked out "kitchen," "sitting room," "dining room," as we entered each dim chamber. But none were so dark that I could not see the floor-to-ceiling shelves full of books that covered nearly every wall on the two floors.

Then he took me into the basement. It was huge, packed nearly solid with piles of cardboard boxes. I lifted one of the lids and found what I'd expected—a box of J. M. Wingarden's two novels, the same books that sat on every shelf in the house.

"Let's step outside for a moment," he said, and when we were on the porch he pointed to the barn, whose top was at least fifty feet from the ground. "It's full of them," he said quietly, "hundreds of cartons of them stacked on skids."

I had to ask. "How many? How many altogether?"

"Of *In the Shadows*, one hundred and thirty thousand, eight hundred and fourteen. *Over the Border*, two hundred and eight thousand, five hundred and forty."

I wanted to laugh in my discomfort, but didn't. "Why have you done this? How many copies of your books do you want?"

"All of them," he said and walked back into the house.

Back in the den he sat in the

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lounger and waited for me to turn on the recorder before he started to talk. I didn't have to ask a question for a long time.

"It began in '68, just after *Over the Border* came out. The reviews were good, and it sold very well." He shook his head. "Too well. It was a few days after Christmas that I felt it for the first time. I awoke just after midnight to the sound of something inside my head. I lay in the dark for a moment, and it was as if someone were there in the room watching me. More than just watching, really—it was as if my mind were being probed, looked into, as if my thoughts were no longer mine alone, but audible for anyone to hear. It was a feeling of intense ..." He waved his hand in the air, reaching for a word, "... discomfort, an obscene intrusion. And I could not shake it off. Finally I took some pills and dropped into sleep.

"But the next day the sensation was back, and now it seemed as though several people were with me, prying into my brain, discovering everything I'd hidden from the world. As the days went by the sensation grew stronger, until I was afraid I was actually going insane, that the tremendous critical and popular success had been too much for me to handle. Yet I wasn't aware of any such change in myself. I only wanted to write more, to use the success as a base from which I could reach higher." He laughed without mirth. "I found myself, after writing a book about madness, going mad."

Sighing deeply, he reclined the lounger so that he stared up at the ceiling. I felt like a psychiatrist. "And then," he went on, "I realized what it was.

"I felt them reading me."

"I couldn't imagine what caused it, and I've not come up with a fully logical answer in all these years. I suppose it may have been due to my sensitivity. I've always been aware of other people's reactions, emotions, and such. Somehow my books may have acted as a sort of storage battery, so that there is actually not only a part of me, but *all* of me in every one of those books."

He sat without speaking for a

minute, then said quietly, "An author has the limitless accessibility of God. He can reach out and speak to millions, each at a different time, precisely when they want to hear his voice, read his mind, reach into his thoughts. But unlike God—lucky, lucky God—he is incapable of turning them away. If they own the book, they own him. His thought ... my thoughts ... are there at their command. They read me, and I must speak to them.

"The first few years were the worst. Shortly after these ... visitations, shall I call them? ... began, I

pieces of myself that I needed to become whole again.

"I wrote to book dealers under my pseudonym, inquiring after copies, and was able to buy them cheaply. Condition was unimportant, and since my investments were showing an honorable return, I was able to amass several thousand copies in the first few months. But it became more difficult. Although the readership dropped, it was still high enough to cause terrible pain."

He suddenly straightened the chair and looked at me. "Think of

**He laughed
without
mirth. "I
found
myself, after
writing a
book about
madness,
going mad."**



ordered my publisher to stop reprinting. They were furious, but I had my rights. The power of a good writer, eh? The damned books were everywhere, and I would have gone bankrupt trying to buy them up, so I bided my time. I had no choice.

"It was agonizing. Millions were reading the books, and I felt them all, prying and probing. Laudanum was the only thing that gave me peace, and I became addicted, but at least the sensations diminished enough to let me sleep, though fitfully.

"The books already in print disappeared from the stores quickly, as they were the books of the season, and their mysterious author caused no end of unwanted publicity. I was read and read and read over and over until my brain was so swollen I knew it would burst. I had to start collecting the books, in the hope that by gathering them up I would be gathering the

your own work," he said. "An article appears in a popular magazine, and for a month or two the odds are good that whatever the time of day, your words, your thoughts, are being read by someone somewhere in this country."

There was horror in his eyes. The thought had occurred to me, particularly at the beginning of my career, and with pleasure. But from the perspective of J. M. Wingarden, I began to feel like an actor who was always on stage in front of an audience that never went home.

"Now," he said, his voice thick, "multiply that by several thousand over a period of years, and you'll know what I've gone through."

"But it would be impossible," I said, "to gather *all* the books. Why even try?"

"I must," he answered, rising and crossing to the shaded window. He reached out a hand to pull back the

shade, but let it drop to his side. "I simply must try to get them back."

"Hasn't readership of your work fallen off considerably? Certainly that must ease this feeling of yours."

"It's changed it, not eased it. Before it was like a torrent. Now it's a faucet dripping in an inconstant rhythm. It stops for a time, and you think, peace at last. Then someone somewhere picks up a book, and it starts again."

He drew in a breath, and the air in his throat rippled in a sob. "That's why I asked you here, so that I could

"They must," he said, looking at me with hurt, frightened eyes. "After I've given them everything I have, would they refuse me so little?"

He sat down and reclined the lounge once more. "As for the renewal of interest, it's a chance I have to take. I can't go on like this much longer. I was able to give up the laudanum years ago, but I must resume its use if things continue as they are. If I do, it will kill me." He craned his neck to look directly into my eyes, and I'll never forget his look of pleading desperation. "You're my final hope, Mr. McPeel."



tell them, beg them all to read me no more, to send me the books ..."

"Send them? Why not destroy them?"

"No!" he cried, with more force than I had imagined him capable of showing. "No. I'm part of them. Too much of my life went into them to see them destroyed. Otherwise, why shouldn't I have destroyed all these? No. They must send them to me. They'll be returned upon my death, I promise that. But I can't afford to buy them anymore, that's impossible for me now."

I tried to grasp some bit of logic in his ramblings, tried to find some way to break down his psychosis. "What if it backfires?" I asked in as reasoned a voice as possible. "What if it creates a renewal of interest, and your books begin to be widely read again? And why should people send you books worth a hundred dollars and up?"

He wouldn't talk about anything else. Before I left, he gave me some papers that would corroborate my story.

He stood on the porch as I drove away, his head down, shoulders hunched as if against a heavy wind. But there was no wind.

When I got back to the city the next day, I transcribed the tape and edited the hard copy. The cassette I erased, dismantled, and threw in the garbage. Then I called Dan, and he told me to bring over the interview first thing Monday morning. He hadn't arrived by ten, so I left it and the corroborating papers with his secretary. He called me that evening.

"This is for real?" he asked.

"For real. He's crazy, Dan. Truly."

He sighed. "Crazy or not, I can place this high. Give me a week."

It took less. He called me on Thursday to tell me that *Time* was the

winning bidder with a figure so high it was embarrassing. The piece appeared three weeks later with a cover photograph of J. M. Wingarden. It was an eight-page, removable, center insert. My by-line, though not on the cover, was firmly ensconced on the first page, along with a photo Dan had supplied.

Wingarden had been amazingly right in one way. Copies of *In the Shadows* and *Over the Border* poured in to *Time's* offices for weeks. But they never got to Wingarden.

Wingarden was dead.

He died the day after his *Time* hit the newsstands. It was a combination of a cerebral hemorrhage and a massive coronary. The doctors couldn't explain how both had hit at once. But I can.

Quite simply, his mind imploded. He couldn't withstand the real or imagined input that must have buffeted his brain as literally millions of people read his words at one time. Perhaps he thought that because they were only spoken, they would not have the power that his written words had had years before. At least, I think he believed that; he seemed so sure it would not harm him.

Yet he was wrong, and that's what I find so frightening. If it was all paranoia, delusion, he shouldn't have died, for he hadn't imagined that outcome. And even if he had—if the whole thing had been a suicidal plot—what human mind could shatter both brain and heart in one cataclysmic moment?

In that impossibility lies my terror. In that and more.

It started the evening Wingarden died. I awoke just after midnight to a touch as light as a strand of spiderweb or the wings of a moth, and a low buzzing inside my head.

I took a few seconds and finally got back to sleep. But the next day was a nightmare, and before noon, before I'd even heard of Wingarden's death, I knew that his awareness was now mine. I talked to Dan about it, and he suggested a psychiatrist. I'll see him, for what it's worth, but I'm not going to stop what I've been doing for the past few weeks—going to every used book shop in Manhattan and buying up those goddamned lousy paperback originals I wrote in a mad burst of hack creativity two years ago.

If any of you send me copies of *Heart of Space*, *Timeframe 2000*, or *Within the Giant's Grip*, I'll send you a dollar for each, plus postage. Fifty cents for any magazine with one of my stories in it.

And please don't read them first. ■



by ANDREW WEINER

O N E

There is a body floating face down in the swimming pool. I think it may be me.

The car radio plays an old popular song as we spin out of control, gravity pulling me up and over the steering wheel and into the hardened glass of the windshield. *This year, next year, sometime, never.* Not even that popular.

The paramedics attempt to induce vomiting. They are far too late.

I feel the water surging up over my head. It is not as bad as I expected, somehow.

T W O

It's hard to say where it began, when or where it began. You would think it would be easy, that part of it at least, but it isn't, it really isn't. I just don't remember these things very clearly anymore, and perhaps I never did, it's impossible to say now. Although I do have the impression that I used to remember things better, I have a very distinct impression to that effect.

Begin at the beginning. That's very easily said. Much too easily said. You should try it yourself, you really should.

But let's say it began in the bar. Let's say that. It could even be the truth of the matter. Very likely it did begin there. Sometimes I think it be-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEN DE LESSIO

***Let's say it happens
in a bar. Or a car.
Or a hospital.
Everything freezes.
Everything happens
at once.***

**THIS YEAR
NEXT YEAR**

THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR

gan someplace else, but in the end it all comes to the same, very much the same.

The bar was just a short cab ride away from the track. I was in a cab, and we passed the bar and I told the cabbie to let me off there. It looked like a good place, certainly quite as good as the next. I don't recall where I had originally been going, or imagined myself to be going, but it could hardly have been very pressing.

I was in a reasonably good mood. I had just lined up a treble which had paid off somewhere in the region of five or ten thousand dollars, anyway a great deal of money, more than I could usually put my hands on. I sat down at the long glass bar and watched the tropical fish swim up and down in the floodlit aquarium beneath the glass. It was an interesting sort of effect, if not exactly thrilling. I ordered a double vodka, over ice.

The bartender seemed familiar, although not as a bartender *per se*. It just seemed to me that I'd seen the man before in one context or another. I remember thinking, in fact, that he didn't look very much like a bartender, more along the lines of a hotel desk clerk, some sort of error at central casting. But it didn't bother me all that much, not at the time; I didn't rack my brains to place the guy.

I sat at the bar and finished my first drink and went to work on another. I watched the fish swim around and around. When I got tired of that I got up and crossed to an empty booth.

The bar was dimly lit, perhaps to heighten the impact of the tropical fish. And cold, very cold. The air conditioning was running rather too efficiently. It was early, I think. The place was almost empty, there were hardly half a dozen customers there. Or perhaps it was just a lousy place. There was a booth full of salesman types at the far end of the room. There was me. And there was her.

She was sitting, alone, at the far end of the fishtank bar, just before the pay phones and the washrooms. And it was strange that I hadn't seen her when I came in, very strange, because she had it all right, whatever it was, she had it. I actually shivered in that

first flash of recognition.

She was dressed casually, summer casual, the details I don't quite recall. Dark hair cut short, or perhaps just pinned back from her face. The eyes were the most astonishing.

I must have been staring, without meaning to, because suddenly she was looking right at me. She seemed to smile, although it was a very ambiguous kind of smile, perhaps more of a nervous mannerism if it was any kind of smile at all. But I took it for enough of an invitation to get up and walk across to her. Or at least, I took a couple of steps in that general direction, with that intent, drawn toward her like some plant pursuing its tropism toward the sun, feeling very good, very excited, a very promising kind of excitement.

And then I stopped in my tracks. Very likely I stumbled. I wasn't aware of exactly what I was doing, only of

tieth time, but it happened. The whole thing slipped away from me, all of it, the bar, the people, everything. I saw all the way through and there was no bar, no people, and I was nowhere at all. There was only a blankness, a cool and grey and muffled kind of blankness.

All of this took just a few moments, hardly any time at all, but quite long enough. Because when it came back, everything seemed wrong. Disorganized, chaotic, wrong. The murmur of the salesman types, which I could now hear with an unnatural clarity, was just meaningless noise. And the people, they were just dummies, very stiff dummies, hardly even moving their lips.

She was still there at the end of the bar, still seeming to smile. But I felt empty, all the way through, completely washed out. And then angry, really angry, shaking with rage,

**Let's say it
began at the
bar. Let's say
that. It could
even be the
truth of
the matter.**



the thoughts in my head, the thoughts and the pictures and the noise.

Perhaps it was the drink. When I drink too much or too fast I sometimes stop seeing things. But it could have been something else, some other detail that tipped me off. It could have been that the hands of the clock on the wall were moving too slow, for example. That would certainly have been careless, if so, but these little details can be very hard to get right, and sometimes things are surprisingly slipshod.

It could have been the clock, and it could have been the drink, and it could have been the bartender, the wrongness of the bartender. And it could have been something else again.

But it happened. For the very first time, perhaps, or maybe for the fif-

flooded with adrenalin, a massive sympathetic nervous system reaction. Hands sweating, heart pumping, ears buzzing, the whole bit. Angry at myself, and at whoever or whatever had done this thing to me.

I grabbed a bottle and smashed it on a table and went for her throat with the jagged edge. The dummies jumped up out of their booth to try and stop me, but they were too slow, way too slow.

T H R E E

I don't know if there's any point in trying to put this in any particular order. It seems to me that one order is as good as the next. The thing at the party happened early on, I think, the first thing, at the party. But it's hard to keep all the parties separate in

my mind, they fuse together, blend into one agonizingly protracted sequence. But let's say this was the first time, the very first party, let's say that.

The house was on the ocean, on the cliffs above an ocean, or maybe just a lake; it doesn't really matter either way. A big party in a big house, and I wasn't enjoying myself very much. I don't recall how I had got there, and I didn't seem to know any of the guests. People were standing around talking about sex, or art, one or the other, perhaps a little sports, too, whatever people talk about at parties like that.

I was talking to a woman, late thirties, cropped blond hair, a lot of rings. She was telling me about a new European movie, or possibly an old one. Schizoid, I thought. Jerky eye movements, conversing from memories of successful conversation, barely holding together. She was coming from that place where staying in control is a matter of faking what you imagine it must be like to be in control. I knew that place, too. Maybe that was why she gave me the jitters. Or maybe I was giving them to myself.

I found myself breathing hard, as if I was about to suffocate. And then the creepy feeling started at the base of my spine, like a shiver of cold but worse than that, much worse. It starts that way sometimes, not always, but sometimes. And then the fear.

I needed to speak, to establish some kind of contact with the room, with the time and place. I cut in on her monologue.

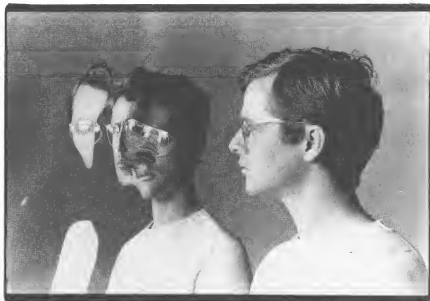
"Listen," I said. "Sometimes I think I'm in a movie. Sometimes I think that."

Which isn't exactly what I thought, not really, it was just the closest I could get to describing how I felt while still remaining marginally intelligible.

She didn't appreciate the interruption. She wasn't moved in the least by my revelation.

"That's rather a banal idea," she said. "Isn't it?"

And in the normal run of things I would have had to agree, that was exactly right, she had driven straight through to the heart of the matter, there was really no question about that. But at that particular juncture I took it personally. I resented her attempt to belittle me. I forgot completely that I had no pride, no reason for pride or shame or embarrassment or anything of that order.



"Banal?" I echoed. "You're calling me banal? Listen, lady, you look in the dictionary under banality, they got your face there."

Which was kind of a stock rejoinder, but it was the best I could come up with then and there and it did seem to work the trick. It made me feel much better, back in the swing of things, really connecting, if you see what I mean.

I left the schizoid lady and moved toward the bar for another drink. The drink made me feel better still. And then I saw her in the far corner of the room, in a knot of people, looking bored. But of course looking wonderful, too.

I don't remember exactly how she was dressed, or how she was wearing her hair that night. The details vary, sometimes a great deal. But it was her, no question about that, whoever she was. The very same flash, exactly as before, except that I'd never seen her before, ever.

And so I joined her little group and broke in on their conversation. I don't remember what I said, or what she said in reply. I have the pictures in my head but not the sound, the sound doesn't carry. In any case, she smiled, and we talked some more. And the group drifted apart and two of us walked out on to the terrace.

We breathed the night air, we looked down at the ocean or the lake. It was all very wonderful, or so I imagine. Only the moon was missing, there was no moon in this scene or in any of the encores. We were about to kiss, or perhaps had already done so, when I turned around. It was as if I knew that someone was there, that her

husband or her lover had followed us out.

He was a tall, somehow anonymous-looking character, not a terribly forceful player. He struggled to look angry, hurt, aggrieved. He spoke accusingly to her, to me. I hardly listened. The thing was becoming unreal, unbelievable.

I told him to be quiet, that I had to think. He would not be quiet. And so I took a swing at his face, his blank and meaningless face. And the scenario dissolved before I could connect. Flickered away, just like that.

F O U R

It was worse the next time, the next time we did the party. This was much later, or perhaps immediately afterward. We had kissed, or were about to kiss, when I turned around, as if I knew that her husband or lover had followed us out. And I did know. And I knew how I knew.

I waited impatiently for the dummy to arrive, holding his glass and looking pained. He started to shout, gesticulate.

"Stop it," I told him. "Shut up. We've done this little number before."

This time he smiled.

"True," he said.

And then the sequence began to abort, but this time it did so in slow motion. The sky went white, then just blank. The terrace began to fade. The dummies got hazy around the edges as if disintegrating, returning to dust.

I stood frozen, watching all this, wishing that I could somehow reverse it, bring back the terrace, and the ocean, and her. I reached out to touch her dissolving arm. And she said,

THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR

quite clearly, "Leave me alone."

F I V E

We were on the beach, on some sea or ocean somewhere, possibly the Mediterranean, it looked very calm, possibly the Adriatic. Sometimes I think we are in the south of France and sometimes I think we are in Greece, but there are also those times when we appear to be in Mexico. At any rate, we were on the beach, lying on reclining chairs outside some café, sipping Campari soda or retsina and taking the sun, no doubt on some kind of vacation.

It was very quiet on the beach, very calm, except for the screams of the children splashing in the waves. None of these children appeared to be ours. We sat there, drinking our drinks and turning the pages of our books, some sort of beach books. I no longer recollect the titles, they were not the sort of thing that would usually stick in your mind. And I felt very relaxed, very calm.

"You can't beat the seaside," I said.

"No," she said. "You really can't."

We went back to our hotel. We sunbathed some more. We cooled ourselves in the ocean or the sea.

Later we went back to our hotel, an old but charming white stucco hotel or perhaps a brand new one. We went up to our room and we made love.

Afterward we lay there, as the dusk came down, listening to the sounds drifting through our window, music from a cruise boat mingling with the waves rushing up on the beach. And then the dusk turned into night and the lights began to flicker through the window.

I got out of bed and crossed to the window to look at the lights stretching out along the waterfront in an endless chain around the bay. She joined me at the window and we sat there looking at these lights together.

It was all very calm, very peaceful. It was the kind of moment you might wish would last forever, except that after a while I didn't. After a while I started to get just a little bored, just a little restless.

Perhaps this was all part of what

my analyst used to call an inability to tolerate intimacy, and perhaps it was something else again.

"Listen," I said. "You want to go get some dinner?"

And then the lights went out.

S I X

Lunch in an expensive restaurant. She was sitting there, waiting for me, not looking good. She had been crying and had made no attempt to hide it.



**She was
running as if
she were
underwater,
and then she
froze in
midstride.**

And she wouldn't speak to me, not a word, would not even discuss the menu. I ordered for both of us, maybe the veal parmesan, maybe the special Chinese for two.

We stared at each other. Or she stared at me, and I shifted uncomfortably in my seat. I felt guilty, or perhaps ashamed. I had not been home in two, three, four nights. I have good reasons for my absence, I am sure of that, although they elude me, have eluded me all along. But this, in any

case, was only a small part of the problem, although I do not recall the rest of it. Some sort of breakdown in communication, no doubt, no doubt at all.

The waiter brought the first course. I waited for her to begin eating. Instead she spoke, hardly a whisper.

"No more," she said. "I can't take anymore. This is the end."

"What?"

"The end," she said, louder this time. And then once again, louder still, loud enough to make people at other tables turn their heads and glance uneasily in our direction. "The end."

"All right," I said. "All right, I heard you."

A silence followed. I groped for words.

"Look," I said, finally. "Don't." I remembered the gift, then pulled the small box out of my pocket.

"Look," I said. "Look at this."

I opened the box. Inside, nestled deep down in the velvet, was a small piece of rough stone, about the size of a marble.

I waited anxiously for her reaction. She stared at it for some time.

"Is this a joke?" she asked, finally.

"I mean, is this some kind of joke?"

"No joke," I said. "It's moon rock. From the moon. Billions of years old."

"Really?" she said. "Really from the moon?"

"Absolutely from the moon."

She smiled tentatively.

"I thought we could set it in a ring, or maybe a necklace, whatever you like."

She reached out to pick the stone from the box.

"You see," I said. "You see that I love you. How could you doubt it?"

Balancing the stone in the palm of her hand she began, abruptly, to cry. She threw it back at me across the table.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"It's no good."

"Why not?"

"I thought," she said, "I thought it would be cold."

She got up and started to run toward the door. She knocked over her chair as she took off, but it never reached the floor. She was heading for the door, but she never reached it, she just got slower and slower, as if she were running underwater, and finally she froze in mid-stride.

I froze, too, my mouth open, trying to shout something, I don't know what, but I never got past the first

syllable. Matters remained like this for a long time, a very long time. And then the whole thing faded, mercifully, away.

S E V E N

Driving scenes, recurrent driving scenes. Curious in the sense that I rarely drive, have hardly any memories of driving, do not recall ever owning a car. And yet when I do drive in these occurrences, it seems to come naturally to me.

It's late afternoon and I'm driving fast, too fast, out of town. I have the feeling that I'm running away from something, something I can't quite bring to mind. Gathering storm clouds lend an urgency to the proceedings. Dusk falls. It will rain, soon, hard and melodramatically.

At the entrance to the expressway I stop for a hitchhiker, a woman somewhere in her early twenties,

she asks. I wait to be told.

"Down here," she says. "Here on the road. With the cars."

"Cars?"

"Shiny painted cars. Leather upholstery, automatic four-speed gearshift, long-range, polished quartz, halogen driving lamps..."

"Stop it," I said. The insult is obscure to me, but I find her tone of voice, her flat and monotonous tone of voice, offensive.

She subsides. The night comes down. Rain begins to hammer against the windshield. The driving is harder, but I feel calmer. Then she starts up again.

"Do you ever think," she asks, "about the afterlife?"

"The what?"

"The afterlife."

"What about it?"

She is really getting on my nerves now.

an old favorite of someone I once knew, and maybe I have never heard it before. But in any case, it's not what I want to hear now, and besides the reception is dreadful.

I punch the buttons, searching for some other kind of music, but there's the same song on every station, all the way up the waveband, playing through some terrible static, an ocean of static. And then even the song fades out, and there is only silence, silence all the way up and down the waveband.

The empty road stretches out ahead of me, leading me deeper and deeper into this empty world, but now I know for sure, know that I must put an end to this here and now. I have taken as much as I am going to take.

I cut right across the far lane and over the central median strip, into the traffic coming the other way. My passenger sits quietly, accepting my decision without comment.

It bothers me that I haven't seen her, but not enough to stop me. I have the feeling that I have already seen her and that I'm not going to see her again, not in this or any other scenario, although of course I am wrong, unless I am right.

E I G H T

Voices in the void. Between scenarios. They seem to rebuke me.

"*Unsubstantiated*," they say. "Disappointing."

But they are not addressing me; they talk only to each other. They do not know that I am eavesdropping, or simply do not care.

"*Problems of design. Material limitations.*"

I try to make contact, make myself heard.

"Listen," I say. "What's going on? I have a right to know."

It seems, however, that I have no right to know, none at all. They ignore me, continue to discuss me. Perhaps they don't hear me. Perhaps they are not talking about me but about something entirely different.

"*Impending review. Possible closure.*"

"Please," I say. "Please tell me. I can't take it anymore. I really can't."

But I do take it. I take it again and again.

N I N E

I'm working on a tv series, a long-running cop show. We're casting our weekly quota of beautiful losers. I'm just standing around, tuning in on the latest argot. It's quite a surprise

I have the feeling that I'm running away from something, something I can't quite bring to mind.



dressed in an old army coat, hair covered by a scarf. She wears a button on the lapel of her coat, SINATRA IN EIGHTY EIGHT, perhaps some sort of joke. She reminds me of no one, in fact hardly interests me at all.

I drive; she talks. She claims to be a philosophy student. Her conversation is wide-ranging but shallow. Deeply shallow, I think, amusing myself as best I can.

She drones on about Wittgenstein. I lose track. Finally, after perhaps fifty miles of this, she says, "You're not listening."

"No," I agree.

I'm too tired to be polite, tired of driving, tired of her. The twilight is ebbing into darkness, and I want to keep my eyes on the road.

"You know where you belong?"

"This is it," she says. "The afterlife. Here and now."

"I think," I say, very slowly, very carefully, fighting down the sudden strangeness in my stomach, "I heard that before. I don't think that's a very original notion."

"Original, shit," she says, disgusted, and turns away, looking out the window at the expressway.

In spite of myself, I feel compelled to pursue the matter.

"What came before?" I ask. "Before this?"

She shrugs. "I don't know. But I know one thing. It was even worse."

The creeping sensation begins at the back of my spine. I turn the radio on; it's playing some old pop song about undying love. Maybe I have heard this song before, maybe it was

THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR

when she turns up. At first I think I must be mistaken.

She has changed, everything about her has changed, the walk, the style, her hair, her clothes, the whole general look about her. I know that she has changed because I remember her from before. She has played some significant part in my life, although I cannot recall it in any great detail. She has a high gloss to her now, an almost palpable gloss, shielding her from the world.

She does not get the part. She is too young or too old or too tall, something of that order. She takes it calmly, it seems to be of little importance to her.

I invite her to have a drink with me in a nearby bar. She agrees. As we drink, I make attempts to reminisce, but she is clearly uninterested in our mutual past, in whatever it is that has passed between us. We are strangers, and perhaps we always were.

My excitement at seeing her again gives way to a sense of loss, a numbness. There is no future here, no future at all. Her eyes are secret, closed away, sealed tight. There is no longer any common ground.

I make excuses and leave. I drive home to my apartment. My head is aching, aching badly, some kind of migraine attack. There is a woman in my apartment, sitting around and reading my books and drinking my liquor, although I do not seem to recognize her. We argue briefly. I go and lock myself in the bathroom and take the second from the cabinet.

T E N

I'm late getting around to her apartment. On the phone she had sounded upset, and I had been in no hurry to face her. And I had work to do, some kind of work.

I ring the doorbell once, twice, a third time. No response. I think that perhaps she is asleep, which would be a relief, since I am in no real shape to face up to her. But she has never been a heavy sleeper, would not be asleep so early, would not sleep through the doorbell.

I dig in my pocket for my key and let myself in. She isn't in the living room, and she isn't in the bed-

room. There is a light burning under the bathroom door. Presumably she is in the bath, and this is why she has failed to answer the door.

The door is unlatched and I push it open. I find that I am correct, she is indeed in the bath, way down in the bath, underneath the dirty brown water. The razor blade is embedded in a bar of soap sitting tidily in the soap dish. I do not recall whether she was usually a tidy person.

I am sick in that bathroom for some period of time. I vomit up

My body is becoming transparent. I can see clear through my feet to the carpet, the peppermint green carpet. The sensation is not unpleasant.

everything I have to vomit into the toilet bowl. And I cry, too, I cry a good deal. Finally I go through to the living room and pick up the telephone to call the police, or an ambulance, whatever people do in situations like this.

What I get is a crossed line, what I assume to be a crossed line.

"Darkness," says the voice on the telephone. "Damnation."

I try to break the connection, but the voice rolls on remorselessly.

"Famine," it says. "Darkness on the face of the deep."

"Get off the line," I shout. "This is an emergency. Would you please

get off the line."

But the voice continues, on and on.

"Who is this?" I ask. "Who the fuck is this?"

There is a pause.

"Who are you?" the voice counters. "Who do you think you are?"

The question, for some reason, terrifies me. Also, I cannot remember my name.

"I know who you are," the voice says. "I know who you are, and you know who I am. And I have absolutely no desire to speak to you."

E L E V E N

And now I am with my analyst. I am with you, and once again you are wasting my time and money.

"You never call her by name. Why is that?"

Questions, always questions. I sulk in silence. Momentarily, I think that I must be back in the hospital. But there are no bars on the windows.

"You're blocking me out. We're making no progress at all."

"That's true," I say. "I can't disagree with that."

"There's no reason to be afraid ..."

"Fear has nothing to do with it."

"I understand ..."

"You understand nothing. I'm not anything you think I am. If you do."

But you are nothing if not persistent.

"What connection do you see ..."

"I see no connection, no connections. There are no connections. Anywhere. Anywhere at all."

I get up and walk toward the door.

"I can understand the reasons for your distress ..."

Furious, I turn on my heel.

"No you can't. You can't understand me at all. You can't understand a word I say, and there is absolutely no sense in pretending otherwise."

I turn back, reach for the door handle. My hand passes right through it.

I look down. My body is becoming transparent. I can see clear through my feet to the carpet, the peppermint green carpet. The sensation is not unpleasant. I feel strangely calm.

"Hey," I say. "I'm disappearing."

You look hard at me. You shrug. "Right," you say. "You're fading away. Too bad."

You look away. Stare out through the window.

I continue to disappear. ■

BOOKS

(continued from page 12)

habitat worlds would be desirable, and it is tacitly agreed that the oppressed or legitimately dissatisfied have the right to make changes; there is no question of gung ho for space and mankind. But after the revolution is over, will the grafting Granders or the peoples of the other little worlds do any better than the Corporation? There is a momentary feeling of holiday, but the future is saturated with potential violence. The saving grace may be the laughter that permeates *The Centrifugal Rickshaw Dancer*.

As I was reading Watkins's novel, I kept realizing that Cordwainer Smith (alias Paul Linebarger) was peeping at me out of the pages. There is the same sort of bizarre imagination and the willingness to push ideas to reductio ad absurdum, the same lopsided drives and dazzling, half-weird inventiveness. Watkins, it is true, does not produce the dark undertones of Smith's work, nor its tantalizing thought-provoking aspects, nor its jaggedness. Nevertheless, *The Centrifugal Rickshaw Dancer* is a fascinating work on its own, admirable in its tight control. It would be unfair to both Linebarger and Watkins if I said that Watkins may develop into the new Cordwainer, for such a comment would depreciate Smith's uniqueness and Watkins's originality, but it would be fair to say that Watkins may be heading toward Smith's empty seat.

Editor's note: The second in the *Rickshaw Dancer* series is due out in June.

Quite different from *Venus of Dreams* and *The Centrifugal Rickshaw Dancer* is **Freedom Beach** by James Patrick Kelly and John Kessel (Bluejay, \$8.95). A story of inner space, it is an individuation novel describing in fantastic terms the restructuring of a shattered, ineffectual would-be writer. Parts of it have been published in the mags.

Perhaps I gave away a little too much when I described it as an individuation novel, since the authors do not let the secret out until the very last—although it will be a sluggish reader who cannot figure things out a good deal sooner. In any case, as with a good mystery story, the important part of *Freedom Beach* is not

its guessable puzzle aspect, but good writing.

Shaun Reed awakens without memories on a strange strand called Freedom Beach, into a country club situation with a group of young people. The others have adapted to life of bathing, ball-playing, and sex, but Shaun cannot accept it. He compulsively strives to get behind the beach, both physically and figuratively, but his associates will not or cannot explain the talking statues; will reply only cryptically, if at all; and, as Shaun learns, breaking the house rules about not injuring others and not writing brings swift punishment.

What is this strange life, asks the rebellious Shaun. Perhaps Myrna, with whom he is most intimate, knows more than he does, but she will not say and soon leaves the beach—by suicide. Then there are the islands, far out, almost invisible, guarded by sharks. What is out there? And, most of all, who are the dreamers and what bargain did Shaun make with them?

The remaking of Shaun proceeds partly in terms of dream episodes, each of which reduces a psychic sprain or misdirection in Shaun. Outstanding among them is Shaun's participation in a rendering of the Faust story in terms of a Marx Brothers motion picture, with Groucho as Faust. The humor, the pitfalls, the closet doings, and the mistaken identities are beautifully handled. Another episode, less successful, blends Shaun's life with a fantasized life of Raymond Chandler, hardboiled and all, as both live out their suicidal drives. A third is Shaun's visit to the walled-in world of Emily Bronte, where spiritual isolation is brought home to him. There are other episodes, the stylistic virtuosity of which is enviable.

Freedom Beach is not as gut-wrenching as Philip Dick's better "reality" work, nor as profound as Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, perhaps because it is too optimistic, perhaps because it is a little too mechanical in its progress. Nevertheless, it is certainly worth reading, and is one of the better novels of the year. Not only is the writing unusually stylish, but the story is filled with good detail and really excellent characterizations, and the surreal and everyday are handled with equal skill. ■

BOOK NOTES

(continued from page 15)

man returns to the boarding house and the hang-outs of his college years—but the resolution is abrupt and rather silly.

"The Lake" by Ray Bradbury concerns a young boy who has lost his girlfriend by drowning: there is a sweetness and a sadness to the story, but it has a rough, fragmentary quality.

TZ readers may be interested in Anne Serling's adaptation of her father's tv script, "The Changing of the Guard." The story, a kind of supernatural *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* was a bit too maudlin for my tastes, though.


I did like, very much, Edward Page Mitchell's "An Uncommon Sort of Spectre," a beautifully written tale that moves between barbed irony and light burlesque. And the premise, which I won't reveal here, has the reader wondering up to the very end, who is the hunter and who is the haunted.

Also excellent is Howard Goldsmith's "The Voices of El Dorado," which manages to generate more tension than any other story in the book. It concerns a boy who finds himself lost in dangerous territory, and who manages to stay alive by his wits, physical ability, and the help of a couple of benign ghosts.

This collection brings to mind a point that has been increasingly bothering me. Does the name Martin H. Greenberg sound familiar? Over the past half dozen or so years Mr. Greenberg, often in collaboration with Charles Waugh, or Joseph Olander, and very often with Mr. Asimov, has produced scores of anthologies, flooding the market with a prolificity that puts former anthology champ Roger Elwood to shame.

Do we need all these collections? Perhaps. But I get the feeling that these things are being cranked out assembly-line style . . . and that makes me uncomfortable.

However, I can recommend the second collection of Dennis Etchison's stories, **Red Dreams**. The regular edition has sold out, and only a few copies of the signed limited edition remain (Scream Press \$35). The publisher will send a catalog upon request. Write to: Scream Press, P.O. Box 8531, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. ■



Ky had risen from the fire. In the bishop's arms, he had come back to life, a miracle on a pillar of flame—faith in a flash of light. But whose light?

The first thing he saw after sliding open the glass door and striding out onto the terrace was the usual pattern of clouds ranged across the sky. Shifting quickly, as if whipped by the wind, the clouds moved like grey tumblers making their antic way across an enormous blue screen. They seemed to be growing darker and thicker, however, and it seemed likely that soon they would block out the already sullen sun altogether. "Massing," thought the bishop, taking note of the religious pun. He decided with a sigh that the radio announcer had been right, and that the day would indeed be overcast. It had been Bishop McCoy's habit these last few days to spend an early hour or two on the terrace working on his extensive correspondence or glancing over the galleys of his most recent book. In the mild atmosphere of a late Roman spring, the bishop could rest quietly and pass his vacation pleasantly enough.

The apartment—the penthouse or *attico*—was the property of a wealthy Italian industrialist, a friend of a friend. It was part of an exclusive eight-story building on the side of Monte Mario, one of the hills overlooking Rome. One reached the apartments

only after passing through a deceptively ancient-looking gate and traveling along a short gravel driveway overhung with robust evergreens. Indeed, the trees did an excellent job of concealing the building from the eyes of unwelcome passers-by or visitors. Not that anyone unwanted was likely to make it past the uniformed guards at the gate or even over the wall itself. And, from what the fawning *portiere* had said one afternoon in response to the bishop's question, there were patrol-dogs, two swaggering German shepherds, powerful enough to chew up a whole . . . oh, what part of the anatomy had he said? Bishop McCoy sighed again.

Leaning against the railing of the terrace, he could see the usually vibrant green of Monte Mario as it sloped down to the enormous city. This morning, with the gathering clouds, everything looked a paler, less animated version of itself. Rome extended without much apparent order. But it was, after all, eternal; it had outlasted all the efforts of puny little men with their charts and plans. Below to his left, partially visible, close to the foot of the hill, was the Foro Italico, a sports facility built by Mussolini, combining blustery Fascist architecture and classical statuary. For a moment, the bishop's gaze settled on the winding Tiber, periodically stapled in place by a variety of bridges, large, small, ancient,

PHOTO BY ZEE



EPIPHANY

by JOHN SHEA

EPIPHANY

modern. Where was the Ponte Milvio, he wondered, where Constantine had received a sign from God? Slightly to his right, looming amid the smaller buildings, immediately noticeable, was St. Peter's and the rest of the Vatican. The dome always reminded him of a giant miter; and seen from his vantage, the colonnades looked like a pair of vast arms welcoming the people of the world.

He wondered if—one day—they would extend a special welcome to him. No, such thoughts were not proper, and it was better not to pursue them. For here in Rome, where history was palpable and inescapable, one knew that time was not to be rushed, that it flowed much like the Tiber, to its own secret rhythms and laws, and who could say when the unexpected might happen? Who could say when a call might be sounded, a revelation made?

"Well," he murmured, turning away from the railing, wondering how to deal with the change in weather. He sighed again. Somehow, it would not do to pass the morning as usual there on the terrace under a grey sky. He would feel, he thought, surprised at himself, too vulnerable without the beneficent sun warm on his shoulders. The clouds, he saw, had almost completed their task. Still, it did not necessarily mean rain.

"Your espresso, Your Excellency," said Ky in his flat, accented English, bearing down upon him with a glistening salver. Bishop McCoy, as usual, cringed slightly at the honorific, but by now had surrendered the struggle: let Ky speak as he desired. For over fifteen years, ever since their experience together during the Vietnam War when McCoy had been an army chaplain—a rather zealous one at first, perhaps, and too much the innocent—Ky had been his devoted servant. And yet, thought the bishop with a sense of irony, not for the first time, I am the servant of the people.

For him, in a private way, Ky had become almost as much a symbol as St. Peter's dome: a constant reminder of certainty and a stimulus to hope in a world that seemed often on the verge of chaos. It was a picture that could never be erased: Ky's hand reaching out of the fire, beseeching, moments before

his death. Later, Ky had resisted any attempt to dislodge him; his life, Ky explained, was no longer his own, and belonged to the man who had saved him. For several months after the incident, when McCoy had still been in Vietnam, he had done his best to find Ky a different life, but to no avail. Finally, he had allowed Ky to stay, and insisted that he accept a modest salary. His presence was now most natural—if still a little unorthodox. How the old ladies of Brooklyn had chattered! And here he was now: the Vietnamese man, in Rome, speaking English.

McCoy sat quietly as Ky moved the cup, pot, and plate of croissants from the tray onto the outdoor table. He was indeed an odd-looking fellow, thought the bishop, with his broad, scarred face, his twisted shoulder, and his shambling walk. But he had survived, praise God, the most terrible ordeal; someone who by all rights, by any earthly reckoning, should have been dead had little cause to complain. Let me accept my own fate with such equanimity, thought McCoy. Still, he told himself with his usual stirrings of ambivalence, it was hard ever to know what the man was thinking. He took a tentative sip of the bitter coffee as the steam swirled up his nostrils, and wondered again about those imperturbable, uncommunicative eyes.

Ky withdrew in his awkward but silent fashion, and the bishop was left alone on the penthouse terrace to drink his morning coffee, nibble at the fresh pastries, and lazily study the open sky above the railing. The clouds continued to mass. Most peculiar. In his short-sleeved knit shirt, McCoy was feeling a little chilly. As usual, though, his notebook was at hand, and a few phrases and ideas came to mind. It was not quite possible, of course, to be all things to all people, yet he prided himself on having done his share as conciliator. In the hubbub and public glare of the current day, Bishop McCoy had a well-deserved reputation for getting things done. Picking up his pen, he began an address to that hot-headed steering committee that had written to him: "Brothers and sisters in Christ, much as I believe that Our Holy Father has not..." He hesitated. "...not done justice to? not grasped the quintessence of? the so-called theology of revolution, I feel it is precipitous, to say the least, to..." He smiled, thinking of Cardinal Ardizzone, his former mentor, a perfect example of what Henry James called a "subtle Roman." Cardinal and bishop.

Some characterized them now as rivals; that, of course, was nonsense. But truly McCoy had learned well the diplomatic arts from him.

His pen moved restlessly, but gave no shadow. It was unseasonably cool.

"There you are!"

Startled to hear a woman's voice, and of all things speaking in English, he dropped his pen. By the time he looked up, she was nearly upon him: he glimpsed a luxuriant mane of blond hair, full scarlet lips, darkly glowing eyes accentuated with mascara. Then, before he could rise, she was leaning over. A strong, nearly animal scent filled his nostrils; and she kissed him firmly on the cheek. He was more sur-

"Are you so holy a man?" She leaned forward so provocatively, he could hardly restrain a laugh.

prised than ever. It took him a few moments to respond.

"Mi rincresco, ma non La capisco." He had managed to trot out his meager Italian, a useful phrase informing his would-be interlocutor of his inability to understand.

"Oh, please, Bishop McCoy, there's no need to pretend."

He considered trying his Italian again, but another glance at her shrewd, animated face told him it was not worth it. The woman, spinning about, walked with a brisk click-clack of her high heels to the railing; there was a calculated swing to her hips that made him smile wryly. What in the world could this sensual creature want with him?

She spun back, still smiling. "Very

nice, very nice indeed. You have fine friends, I see."

"How did you find me? ... How, now that I think of it, did you get in?"

"Oh, we have our ways," she said, tossing her mane.

"We? There's more of you?"

"I'm a reporter, Your Excellency."

"A reporter?" He suppressed a fuller reply. Then he sighed. "But how ...?"

"Yes, you're incognito, I know. Thought you'd given us the slip, didn't you? Hiding out in the Eternal City of all places! Well, we're persistent."

The bishop sat down wearily, all at once feeling his years. "But how did you get in *here*? Through the gate? Past the *portiere*? Past Ky? ... I



didn't even hear the terrace doors open."

"So engrossed in our writing, eh? ... Don't worry, I respect that, very much." She smiled, her full red lips nearly a caricature. "We're brothers, sisters, aren't we?" She tossed her small handbag on the table and prepared to sit beside him. "Nice view you have here. Rome for the taking, so to speak." She gave a little wiggle in the heavy metal chair, then crossed her legs. She did not pull her skirt down, and McCoy glanced away from the too generous display of sleek, nyloned flesh.

"What can I do for you, Miss ...?" He stretched the word out, waiting for her to provide the information.

"Landers, Veronica Landers is the name. From the *Washington Post*."

"Good God!" he exclaimed, passing a hand over his eyes.

"Bishop McCoy, please! Taking the Lord's name in vain! What would the less sophisticated among us say?" Her smile broadened again, but there seemed to be little warmth in her eyes. He stared at her, trying to place her accent, to estimate how old she was beneath the garish make-up and the almost parodic blond hair. There was something about her ... "Does the Vatican know where you are?" she asked suddenly.

"Since this is a private vacation—and a pitifully brief one—I really don't think that's any concern of yours." He played with the handle of his small cup.

"Perhaps not." She tapped her cheek, and for the first time the bishop noticed that she was wearing old-fashioned gloves, almost like something from the fifties. Certainly, for an investigative reporter, she dressed in a rather incongruous fashion. "But surely you admit that you are newsworthy—a fresh spokesman of hope for those dissatisfied with the status quo! World affairs being what they are ..."

"Where did you say you were from?"

"The *Times*. One of our European correspondents." She gave him another smile, and leaned forward conspiratorially. Again, his senses swam with the powerful, ambiguous odor. "Perhaps you have read me? Last week, on the West German terrorists, or the Spanish financial scandals?"

"I'm afraid I must have missed it."

"Ah ... Well, I'll try to retain my self-esteem."

Bishop McCoy was beginning to feel more and more uneasy. He touched his cheek, where she had so boldly kissed him, and wondered whether she had left a bright, telltale mark: a sign of what? No doubt it was his imagination, but his skin felt warm, almost feverish. When he caught her looking at him, he abruptly turned his gaze back to the sky. There was hardly a glimmer of the sun beyond the scowling clouds. "You never did tell me, Miss Landers, why you've come here."

"Merely doing my job. You're a major public figure, you know. Whatever you do is news. And if you're taking a vacation from the public eye—lying low, as it were, in the Pope's backyard—well!" She shrugged.

"So my doing *nothing* is noteworthy?" he asked coldly. He wondered: mid-twenties? Mid-forties, exceptionally well preserved? So much powder and mascara: more like a tart, pardon the expression, than the next

Barbara Walters or Oriana Fallaci.

"Is it really *nothing*, your excellency? No doubt you've been *thinking* ... heavily." Her lips pursed. "Consider my point of view: to discover the famous Bishop Gerald McCoy, perched above Rome—and the Vatican—like an ambitious general returned to throw his enormous shadow upon the imperial city!"

"You have a particularly vivid imagination, Miss Landers."

"I wonder if you have any ambitions?"

"I am merely a man doing his job as well as he can. I possess a certain amount of energy. Beyond that ..." He made an impatient gesture. "Please don't dredge up those fantasies about the first American pope and so forth. In the first place, one does not *decide* to become pope; one is chosen. And why talk about remote possibilities, no doubt at least ten years in the future, if ever."

"You have your denials nicely prepared," said the woman. She produced a few items from her bag: eye liner, lipstick, a small notebook, a Bic pen. "Do you have any response to what Cardinal Weldon of Chicago said about you? That smiling television star who thinks he's the holiest man on God's green earth," as I recall."

"Where is the earth green these days?" replied Bishop McCoy with a wry smile. "Well, parts of Monte Mario, of course ..."

"That's all you have to say?"

"What else can I say? That Cardinal Weldon has a way with words?"

"Are you so holy a man?" She leaned forward in so provocative a manner that he could not restrain a laugh. "I hope that my coming here has not *compromised* you ... What would the neighbors think?"

The bishop leaned back, regaining some breathing-room. "My dear Miss Landers, as far as I know, the neighbors have no idea who I am, and since I don't sport a clerical collar or a miter out here on the terrace ..."

"A wolf in sheep's clothing, wouldn't you say?"

"Oh, enough, Miss Landers. If this is all you and the *Times* are interested in, I'll have to ask you to leave."

"The *Post*, you mean." She made a quick notation in her book. "I should say that there's at least one pair of eyes upon us this very moment." She waved over the bishop's shoulder. "Rather matronly woman; fancy jewels; big nose. Staring out the window of the next apartment building. It

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must be Princess Balduino." McCoy did not turn to look. "But then, she's a believer, too, no doubt."

"Miss Landers, I find your manner insulting, and I do indeed ask you to leave this moment."

"And if I refuse?"

"My man will escort you out."

"Oh, that would be nice. And what would the newspaper-reading public think: 'Reporter Brutalized By Bishop's Thug!' Tut-tut."

He paused before replying. "Actually, Miss Landers—if that is your name—I don't think you're a reporter at all. Ah, here's Ky, to help you find your way to the door." The servant approached in his shambling way, his face grey beneath the overcast sky. "Ky, this lady will be leaving now. Please show her the way out."

Ky made a brief bow, then turned to the woman. He was about to touch her elbow when his hand seemed to freeze. Annoyed, McCoy noticed that she was smiling broadly. Her eyes were fixed on the Vietnamese man's, and he appeared incapable of making the slightest movement. The bishop gritted his teeth.

"Ky, show this woman to the door," he said, more loudly.

"Yes, Your Excellency," he replied, but made no further motion.

"I seem to have fascinated him," murmured the woman. "Hasn't he ever seen a female before? Surely you do not sequester yourselves from half of humanity!"

Bishop McCoy stared at his servant, his annoyance quickly giving way to wonder. The man seemed part of a strange tableau being enacted on this terrace beneath a leaden sky: but for what purpose?

"Ugly fellow, let's be honest about it. Vietnamese?"

"Yes," said McCoy, half listening, his mind racing in search of explanations.

"The person whose life you saved during the war, then. Then dead man who lived?" Her voice was low, insinuating, unpleasant.

"How did you know that?" demanded the bishop sharply, twisting in his chair. All at once his cheek felt warm again—no, hot—and he had a sudden mental image of the lipstick stain glowering red like a virulent

parasite. It could not be sunburn. His resentment flared at this sardonic young (old?) woman who had invaded his retreat, made her offensive charges, and disrupted his day. He was beginning to doubt that he'd recover his equanimity and perspective in time to do some decent work. And now this prying about Ky!

"So it was!" she exclaimed with evident satisfaction.

"How did you know?" His fingers brushed at his cheek, and the sensation was acute and unpleasant.

"You've dropped a few hints along the way, you must admit that, my dear Bishop McCoy. A curious strategy, though: as if you wanted your readers' praise but felt at the same time humble, unworthy." She clucked.

"I really think a more forthright statement on the case would have been more effective . . . instead of your coy little half-congratulatory asides." A paperback book had appeared in her hands, and she was leafing through its pages. "Here, I quote: 'In the senseless conflagration that was the Vietnam War, many a man found his certainties destroyed; those of us who witnessed death and suffering at first hand felt our smug little worlds crumbling beneath our feet. One such participant described an experience in a small village . . .'"

McCoy's mind retreated from the safe, abstract prose, and he found himself reliving those horrible, miraculous minutes. The soldier was dead in his arms, and McCoy wandered in a daze into the holocaust of the burning village, not heeding the warning calls of the Americans and the ARVN's, scarcely noticing the whine of bullets, the crash of buildings collapsing, the thunder of explosions. Suddenly he was at the threshold of a destroyed hut, staring at a Vietnamese peasant who was pinned under burning wreckage. The man was barely alive, and in the flames that roared around him his eyes pleaded. Let him die, was McCoy's first thought. Don't give him false hope. If by some miracle he could force his way into the fiery hui and pull him free, the man would be dead soon anyway, burned and crushed and consumed by a vision of despair that nobody could long sustain. He was dying, he was dead—but McCoy struggled forward. A burning raft staggered him; his outstretched hands were the color of flames. He felt himself falling . . .

"I saved him. Somehow, I saved him."

The woman looked up, her smile

more ambiguous than ever. "Surely it was impossible!"

"It was. He was pinned under by hundreds and hundreds of pounds of debris, wood, dirt. The fire was everywhere. Yet I saved him. I dug him out, even as the place collapsed around me, and my retreat was cut off." His hand trembling; he reached out and touched Ky on the arm, as if to verify the recollection. Ky was there, solid. The servant made a quiet sound and moved a step or two back from the table. "So much is fragmented, or lost. It may have been a miracle," he added in a quiet voice.

"May have been? You seem to suggest something more positive than that in this account," she said, giving

In the senseless conflagration that was the Vietnamese War, many a man found his certainties destroyed.

the book a little flip.

"Who can say what is a miracle and what is not? In our private lives especially, when there is no one else to see . . ."

"So you believed it to be a miracle."

He did not answer for a few moments, his eyes resting somewhat shyly on Ky. "God does not vouchsafe us many miracles, unequivocal miracles—visions, acts. Only a few . . ."

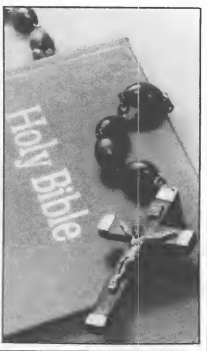
"You doubt yourself, then?"

"No. I cannot explain it otherwise . . . By all rights, both of us should have died then and there. To me, yes, it was a miracle." Straightening his back with an effort, he turned to confront her. "Now that I've said it, Miss . . . Landers? . . . perhaps you'll feel more inclined to leave. You have a

story now? Perhaps not quite for the *Times*, but the *National Enquirer*?"

"But a man who has lived through a miracle!" She plunged her hands into her lap, feigning a girlish excitement. "Surely he would be profoundly changed!" She pursed her lips, then slowly smiled. He saw little beyond the brilliant red lips, reminding him of the fire; then for a terrifying moment his vision seemed to cloud. "It would not surprise me in the least to learn that such a man might feel himself privileged in certain significant ways. He might very well be inspired, driven to achieve more than mere mortals could hope to do."

Now he was staring into her eyes, letting her words twist sharply through



his mind, and he could not stop them as they bored ever more deeply into the private corners where his secret lived, the ambition whose existence he had never brought himself to admit. It was too painful. And even now, as he breathed brokenly, a voice was telling him that there was nothing wrong, that some indeed were called, that the weak and timid person was the one who fled from responsibility. Would God call, only to let Himself be rejected?

In that great moment of doubt, when there had been only nothingness—shrinking even the fire to a colorless insignificance—when nothingness filled the universe, he had begged. And been answered. It was his rock, solid, unforgettable, an unmoving island in the

dark seas of chaos. But then he heard her speaking again. "... if this, only this, were true, then nothing was ever too great to overcome. With this anchor, this certainty ..." How she droned on, mimicking his innermost thoughts, mocking them with her tone, trying to impugn his devotion and sacrifices. He wouldn't stand for it! No: he must. It was the right way.

His smile was that of an unworldly martyr poised in a Renaissance painting. Take these stones, lay these faggots on the pyre. But it did not last. It could not. He was, as he knew himself to be, too human. He let her speak for a few seconds more, then rose slowly from his chair. Could it be morning still? Where had the sun vanished? Dizzy. The left side of his face tingled, but he would not touch it. God tests those He chooses. When he stared at the sky, the clouds seemed to swirl darkly, threatening rain, thunder, or something greater. He blinked. Beyond the clouds, just out of sight, was there something lurking, hiding, teasing? Vague forms, nearly as insubstantial as the clouds themselves?

Bishop McCoy quivered, feeling her voice echoing inside his head. He lumbered to the railing and looked down, toward Rome, toward certainty. It was all recognizable, the city he loved, the city that had lasted; through the twilight, he glimpsed the sprawl of ruins, sleek marble and steel apartment buildings, the plain exteriors of Counter-Reformation churches, modern obelisks, the Tiber following its eternal route—but how leaden it looked now, reflecting the sky! His gaze traveled to the largest dome of all.

"And this—could it all be yours?"

"I ... don't want it," he replied, turning violently to where she now stood, casually leaning her elbows on the railing. "It's not mine to have, it's no one's to give."

"Yes, that's the proper response. But perhaps it's what you *deserve*."

"I've told you. Go! Leave now! ... Leave me alone!"

"But it's all nothing finally, isn't it? Nothing at all. All a waste, a nullity. We know that, don't we?" She waved, her hands darting out into the abyss. "The coming of the missiles, slaughter in India, revolution and carnage in Central America, bombs in London department stores, tanks in Afghanistan, children dying in every corner ... You may as well admit it, my dear bishop, and pray that the flood comes soon. Please, Lord, show Your mercy and kill my sick world!"

"You're wrong!" he shouted. The

breeze whipped her hair around, blond flames. He could not bear to look directly at her mouth.

"Oh, yes, that's right. There's Ky, isn't there. As long as there's Ky," she said laughing. "As long as there's Ky!"

"I saw it. I lived it."

"Yes, of course. Don't I know it!" She turned slightly. "Come here, Ky." The Vietnamese man shambled forward, his expression blank. "You see how obedient he is? You've been leading a comfortable life. Your Excellency. Ah, here he is, your emblem of faith, your charm against despair."

Clutching the railing, McCoy looked on, wanting to close his eyes, wanting to run to the safety of the apartment, away from her words, away from the bleak clouds that were settling lower on the horizon, swallowing all the air. "Ky, please get me my sweater," he managed to say. A faint hope that behaving normally would bring about normalcy. "Ky?"

"No, Ky. Stay. And show me—show him—what you can do." The words dripped with pride. "My little miracle."

"No, no!" the bishop shouted, reaching out.

But he could do nothing. Not even shield his eyes. Still without expression, Ky raised his arms, seized hold of his close-cropped head, and pulled it off. Out spurted a dark oily stream, gushing from his hollow neck, spewing forth hundreds of tiny creatures, some finned, webbed, scaly, with rolling eyes and black, broken teeth, others gelatinous pustular, the color of decayed liver, all dropping onto the terrace, splattering, then curling and twisting about his feet. They mewled and gibbered like idiot children, pulsating, oozing, gesticulating flopping about on the pavement.

McCoy did not look up. For a moment, he stared at Ky's stolid legs. He felt his heart struggle, but it was punctured, deflated: nothingness poured in. Without another word, he flung himself over the railing, eight stories to fall, time enough to pray, time enough to refuse.

Alone on the terrace, she peered over the railing. It was satisfactory. Now for a good scream, a terrified dash into the shelter of the apartment, the neighbors' alarm; later, a woman's handbag left behind, a kiss traced on a dead man's cheek; later still, the identification of a man who was a symbol, whose death under any set of circumstances would reverberate profoundly, but how much more so thus.

IN THE GRAY PLACE



Wesley

BY ROGER PARSON

**When you walk, the
ground can go soft.
Then you fall in.
Sometimes it's not so
bad. Unless it's the
wrong part of you.**

I walked on, until I came to where there were some people, just standing around for the most part. I joined them. They weren't very happy to see me, of course, but there wasn't much they could do about it. Some of them were talking sort of quietly; nobody ever talks loudly, or does anything too quickly, for fear of disturbing whatever it is that makes the changes.

Somebody said there hadn't been any activity around there in quite a while. Some of them even looked sort of relaxed. I saw one fellow actually lying down! He didn't look too bright, though, and everyone else was staying away from him, the way you do when it looks like someone is asking for it.

There were maybe twelve or fourteen people in there, which is quite a



IN THE GRAY PLACE

few to be in any one place. Three were in. They weren't too bad. There was one man with one leg in almost to the knee, and another with both legs in to just above the knee. There was a woman who was the worst off, on her side, with her legs and right hip in, and her right arm almost up to the shoulder, and some of her hair so she couldn't move her head much. That made it very uncomfortable, but there was nothing anybody could do. If there'd been a knife or something we might have been able to cut her hair, but of course there was nothing like that.

Everybody has his own ideas, of course. One of the most popular is that there are areas that stay stable for long periods, and other areas where there're changes all the time, or most of the time. Most people, if they find an area that seems to be stable, will stay there. They think the more you move around, the more trouble you're likely to get into.

On the other hand, most people seem to believe that the more people there are in an area, the riskier it gets because that's more likely to attract attention, and so while they'll stop in a place that seems safer, they're never happy to see any newcomers show up. That makes it hard to get to know people around here.

Everybody stood around. I stood there too and looked as far as I could see out over the flat gray expanse to the dim gray straight line of the horizon, but I didn't see anyplace that looked like a better place to be than right there. So I stayed. I tried to talk to a couple of people, but they were very edgy, perhaps because of the number there. The ones who were in had been in a long time and they were pretty bitter. I was feeling the hunger again. I'd been feeling thirsty a while before, but now that had gone, for a while. Not that I'd had anything to drink, of course, but the hunger and thirst aren't constant. They come and go, but you feel them most of the time, particularly the thirst.

I stood there feeling the nothing. After a while I started to feel edgy myself. I can't stay in one place too long. I start feeling this itch in my feet and after a while I have to move on.

I just can't trust any one place too much, and if I stand too long I start to feel too tired. Sometimes I even think about lying down....

So I started walking, very slowly and carefully the way you do, putting each foot in front of me and testing before I put my weight on it. Each foot down on the smooth, flat gray surface, as smooth as marble, as hard as metal, not cold or warm or any temperature at all. It's so smooth and hard you think it ought to reflect, but it doesn't, not at all, like the surface of milk. Gray milk. You can't see yourself; you can see your arms and legs and belly—but never your own face.

The woman who was the worst off was on her side, her legs and right hip in, and some of her hair.

I looked around once in a while to see if I could see anyone. You'd think you could see for miles, but you can't somehow. There's nothing in the way and you can see all the way to the horizon, but the horizon must be very close, because you come up on people and you find you're within a couple of hundred yards of them and you haven't seen them before.

Everybody has his own theory. I met a man once who wanted to be in a group, thought it was safer. His idea was that it was controlled by people's minds; a lot of people wishing it would stay stable is what made for the most stability. He said the places where nobody was were the wild places; anything could happen. I don't know. I guess it's possible, but it seems to me that if we had any control it wouldn't be as bad as it is. His theory didn't do him much good, anyway, because he

couldn't persuade many people to stay with him. People tend to avoid anybody who seems strange or seems to be taking chances. I might have stayed with him, what the hell, but I couldn't stay in any one place and he didn't want to move. That was part of his theory.

Some say that over the long run there's the same amount of activity everywhere, so maybe the best place to be isn't where there *hasn't* been much activity lately because the chances are just that much greater that there will be some. Most people, though, seem to feel that there are safe places and dangerous places, and the problem is to try to tell them apart. The frustrating thing is that there may be some places that are perfectly safe, and there's no activity at all, ever. You get that thought while you're walking along; maybe this is the safest place there is, maybe this is the only safe place, and I should just stay right here. But the hell of it is, there's just no way to know. If a place were perfectly safe, then there would never be anybody in and no way to mark it. So you keep walking.

You put each foot down carefully and test before you put your weight on it. There's no other way to tell. You can't see any difference between the solid and the liquid, not from far away nor up close, not from any angle. The only way to tell the liquid is there is by the *feel*, and then it's often too late. But not always. You can get away if you're quick enough. The solid can go liquid on you, too, in an instant, and that's when you go in, but sometimes it's slow, gradual, and you can break away. Or so I've been told. I've never felt that myself, and I've talked to some who don't believe that either. It usually goes from liquid back to solid instantly, too. But maybe sometimes that, too, is slow enough so you can break away.

So I walked and talked to anybody I met, if they would talk to me.

Once in a while, a long while, in the distance I'd see somebody go in. Or maybe someone quickly turn, or jump back and run away, and I'd know they'd felt the liquid, or thought they did. Once somebody yelled a warning. You don't hear that very often, and it isn't appreciated as much as you might think. People don't like to hear any loud noises or any disturbance. Leave well enough alone is the idea. Don't do anything to stir things up.

Of course, there are those who say that nothing you do makes any

difference anyway, so you might as well not worry about it because the whole thing is completely random. You'd think those would be the most relaxed people, but they aren't always. Maybe they don't really believe it themselves. Somehow you don't want to believe that; somehow it makes it worse to think that there's nothing you can do to save yourself.

Fairly often I'd pass somebody who was in, and once in a while I'd stop to talk. Some of them had been in a while and some were just in. The usual. I met one girl, young and pretty—she'd felt her legs go in and thrown her hands forward by instinct—so now there she was with her legs in to the knees and her hands in to the wrists. Of course she couldn't move very much and was very uncomfortable, and she was crying. I felt bad, but what could I do? But she was a very pretty girl and she looked so helpless. She disturbed me very much, so I walked away from there in a hurry, getting out before I could get into trouble.

When you're in you have pretty mixed feelings, to say the least. Then there's not much you can do. You don't have the option of deciding whether to go or stay. All you can do is to try to make yourself as comfortable as possible. In a way it's a relief not to have to make any decisions. But when you're in you don't know what to hope for. You want it to loosen up because then you have a chance of getting into a better position, maybe getting out and getting free. On the other hand, there's always the chance you could be much worse off.

I was talking once to a fellow who was in, but not too bad at all. Just one foot at the ankle. He had been there for some time, he told me, but he was feeling all right. We talked for a while and then it happened. He was standing there and suddenly it went liquid all around him. He'd been joking and laughing, and he hadn't felt it coming on and he wasn't prepared. He wasn't able to move quickly enough to get out, and he slipped in up to the neck, and it solidified around him, just his head out. My God, the shock and horror on his face, and then he started screaming and crying and cursing me; his voice was horrible because his chest was squeezed and he couldn't get enough air into his lungs. I'd jumped back when I saw it was going liquid, and at that I got right out of there. There was nothing I could do and I felt maybe it was my fault. He thought so, anyway.

Nobody likes to think about the worst that can happen, and I'm not sure it happens because I've never seen it, but ... what if you went all the way in? What if it went liquid and you went down and it was liquid over a wide area and there was nothing to grab to pull yourself out and nothing to stop you, and you went under and the surface closed over you and hardened? There'd be no trace. I think about that sometimes when I'm walking along on the flat, blank, gray surface, feeling my way. I might be walking over someone right now, and I'd never know it.

Very few people want to talk about that. Some say it would never



happen because you'd float, at least a part of you would. That's the sort of thing you'd like to believe.

I heard a story once. Somebody was walking along and saw a man come out who had been in completely. Off to one side the surface broke and someone appeared where there had been no one before. The man had struggled up and out, got to a solid place and got onto his feet, staggered for a bit and then walked away. But you don't know whether you believe that, and you don't know whether you want to believe it. It means you can go all the way in, but it also means you can get out again. But after how long?

Or maybe that was a newcomer, just getting here. Maybe that's how you get here, or one of the ways. Who's to say about that, either?

I passed a man once, I don't tell

people about it, and I don't like to think about it. He was in, just a little, but it was his hands and face that were in, so he couldn't breathe. God! He was thrashing around, it must have been agony. But he didn't die, of course. You don't die here. It's like the hunger and thirst you feel. There's nothing to eat or drink, but you don't starve, you don't get dehydrated, you just feel the thirst and hunger. You can breathe; there's air. That's one of the few things that's here; that and the people and the flat, gray surface and the flat, gray sky.

There's sex, too. Or rather, there's the need for it, you feel that, too. But there's not much to be done about that, either. There are women, of course, about as many women as men, and some of them are very nice. As a matter of fact most of them are. But how would you dare? Almost nobody will come within five or six feet of someone else. It's too much of a chance to take. Suppose you were lying on that gray surface with another body on top of you and the surface went liquid under you? You'd have no chance, you'd be driven under for sure. Nobody is going to take a chance like that.

And also it's the sort of thing that nobody would want to have anyone else doing. Who knows what effect it might have? If nobody will talk in a loud voice, you can be damned sure nobody is going to be willing to have sex.

I wonder sometimes what everyone would do if someone really started to do something the rest didn't want him to do. I don't know quite what that would be; there aren't too many ways to do the wrong thing here. There aren't too many options. But I wonder what would happen. I think that everyone else would simply get out of there as fast as possible. That's what happens now whenever someone is acting strangely.

I wonder, too, why it is that most of the women here look young and attractive, and the men, too, for that matter. I never see a child or anyone old, or anyone who looks crippled or sick. The most obvious answer, of course, is the one you don't like to think of; that they all went under, that they weren't quick enough or strong enough to struggle out of the way when they felt the softening under them.

I was walking along, not moving too fast, and I saw something very strange, something I'd never seen the like of before. There was a man in up

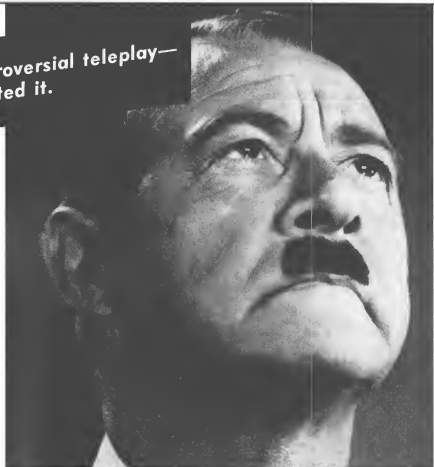
(continued on page 101)

Rod Serling's most controversial teleplay—
and the haters who hated it.

From its inception, *The Twilight Zone* was a favored target of the angry-letter writers of America. If Rod Serling presented a characterization of the archangel Gabriel (as he did in 1960 in "A Passage for Trumpet"), he'd get a letter from a viewer in Michigan accusing *Twilight Zone* of blasphemy. If he depicted a drunken department store Santa ("Night of the Meek," also 1960), he'd hear from angered parents who wanted their impressionable youngsters to continue to believe in St. Nick's purity. An offhand comment by an unpleasant character in 1961's "Static" (script by Charles Beaumont) that "Tommy Dorsey's dead" was pinpointed as "bad taste" by a viewer who was a friend of Dorsey's widow. And, of course, Serling was "damned if he did, damned if he didn't": His depiction of Khrushchev as the world's most notorious liar in "The Whole Truth" (1961) incurred the wrath of a California lady who accused Serling of trying to upset the "peaceful co-existence" appellation, while the anti-war stance of 1963's "The Thirty-Fathom Grave" brought an inflammatory letter from another corner of California, this time from a husband and wife who found Serling's script antimilitary (hardly the case, since the program was filmed on a genuine naval vessel with full U.S. Navy cooperation), anti-American, and very likely pro-Red.

The angry mail sent to *Twilight Zone* was, in general, a mere trickle compared to the favorable missives received by the program's staff. This, however, was not the case following the January 24, 1963 telecast of Serling's hour-long TZ play, "He's Alive!"

"He's Alive!" was the story of an American fascist (Dennis Hopper), whose group gets nowhere until he starts getting advice from a mysterious, shadowy figure. This mystery man suggests various ways that the fascist group can win public approval: by making themselves the underdog, creating a martyr, eliminating those who stand in the way. At the climax, the shadowy stranger is, of course, revealed to be Adolph Hitler (played, with not-terribly-convincing facial



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ALL THE LITTLE HITLERS

by HAL ERICKSON

makeup, by Curt Conway). Serling's point was that Hitler will live as long as good men do nothing to fight his poisonous message.

While "He's Alive!" is far from subtle, and while it falls back on some rather contrived plot devices (such as the character of an elderly Jew who is, believe it or not, the young fascist's only real friend), the play is a competent capsule depiction of Hitler's own rise to power.

To Rod Serling, "He's Alive!" was far more than just another sausage from the *Twilight Zone* grinder.

He felt that the play was the best he had written for the 1962-63 series and had hopes for its development beyond the hour-long format. Distressed that producer Herbert Hirschmann had edited the film to conform to time-restrictions, eliminating a nightmarish sequence in which Dennis Hopper, suddenly terrified at the prospect of meeting Hitler face-to-face, runs through the deserted city streets only to be confronted by swastikas, Nazi propaganda posters, and copies of *Mein Kampf* on every street corner, Serling suggested that

two versions of "He's Alive" be prepared in the editing room. One, the shorter of the two, would be telecast; the other would be expanded into a theatrical feature film. (Serling had been developing a *Twilight Zone* motion picture since 1960, only to be thwarted by uninterested or skeptical producers at every turn.) To this end, Serling started writing additional scenes, expanding the characters of Dennis Hopper's three followers (one of whom was played by Paul Mazursky, the future director of such films as *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice* and *Moscow on the Hudson*) and adding, as a nominal "sympathetic" protagonist, the character of a dedicated FBI man who is investigating Hopper's fascist movement. Because *Twilight Zone's* already conservative budget had been stretched to the breaking point, Hirschmann turned down Serling's suggestions.

Perhaps Serling felt that a feature film would allow him certain freedoms denied him by television. He'd already been forced not to mention Hopper's neo-Nazi organization by name and had had to replace the swastika that the group should have used as its logo with a neutral clenched-fist design. Even the Hopper character name was changed to avoid lawsuits. Originally, he'd been "Peter Collier," but when it was discovered that there were a number of Colliers involved in real-life fascist activities, the character was rechristened "Peter Vollmer." Serling had been under attack of late by critics who felt that the writer had sold out to commercialism, that the "angry young man" of television's golden age had become a toothless elder statesman, incapable of invoking the dramatic clout and controversy that had attended Serling's work of the 1950s; perhaps the writer felt that a no-punches-pulled *Twilight Zone* film attacking modern extremism would prove that he hadn't lost his sense of justice.

It's often possible for today's television historians to pick on Serling. "So he was against fascism," they say. "So what? Who isn't?"

Well, you'd be surprised.

To be sure, much of the mail received by *Twilight Zone's* staff following the premiere of "He's Alive" was laudatory. "While there was much of the piece that I was disappointed in, I thought its central message *did* come through," wrote a

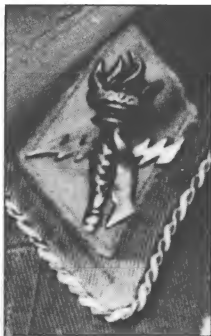
Newark, N.J., viewer. "A great public service," noted a Portsmouth, Va. minister.

Some viewers' attitudes were rather unclear. "It was horrible," complained a man in a letter to Walter E. Sickner, the general manager of Orlando, Florida's CBS affiliate, WDBO-TV. "The kind of 'hated propaganda' promoted by a vengeful minority, of which we have seen so much recently."

Was the viewer offended by the fictional Nazis, or was it Serling's condemnation of those Nazis that was offensive? Sickner's reply to this angry man was masterful. Taking his cue from the writer's statement that he'd only watched the first fifteen minutes of "He's Alive," Sickner sent the man a complete script of the play, suggesting that he might form a more rounded opinion by reading the entire script. Serling, apprised of the station manager's diplomacy, praised Sickner in a letter: "Not only are you one helluva judge of human nature—but you must be Number One in the public relations field in Florida at least!"

On the other hand, the angry-letter writers made their opinions all too clear. Within a week after the telecast, Serling and his staff received four thousand letters for which the designation "hate mail" was much too mild. Communications were received from the followers of the prominent anti-Semite Gerald L. K. Smith, from the disciples of faith-healer/politician Billy Jo Hargis, from such august concerns as "The White Citizen's Councils" and "Christian Anti-Communism Schools." Serling and company were addressed as "commie bastards" by some, while other literary wits characterized the *Twilight Zone* people as "kike lovers" and "nigger lovers." An organization called "Geo Politics" offered the novel suggestion that "Jews should be put in gas ovens and niggers shipped back to Africa."

Most of these knuckle-dragging intellectuals were upset that their race hatred was being presented in an unfavorable light. A number of them, however, were incensed because of one brief scene in Act Two of "He's Alive"—the sequence in which Peter Vollmer turns his invective away from his usual minority-group targets and starts insisting that his group of neo-Nazis is under attack from the Communists, in this



Opposite page: Curt Conway feigning the Führer who refuses to die.

Above: The insignia Serling was forced to use in place of Hitler's more famous symbol, thanks to networks qualms.

way alligging himself with the anti-Communist sentiments of those listening to him. Since Vollmer is a pocket edition of Hitler, this attack on Communism was historically accurate (the Nazis and Communists had been at each other's throats since Germany's inflation-ridden 1920's); Vollmer's cloaking himself in anti-Communism was also meant to be an illustration of Samuel Johnson's remark that "Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel."

Serling's attackers missed this point entirely: To them, Vollmer's phony anti-Communism was proof positive of Serling's "actual" pro-Communism.

After wading through the realms of hate-mail, Serling was in no mood for an attack from the press. While *The Indianapolis Star* was not and is not pro-Nazi or anti-Semitic, in 1963 it was a staunchly conservative, anti-Communist publication. In its January 31 edition of that year, the *Star* let Serling and "He's Alive" have it:

Nobody can disagree with whatever scorn one wants to heap on Adolph Hitler ... Yet

we are a little puzzled as to the relevance of this production to contemporary events. Indeed, this attempt to establish relevance struck us as more than a little cockeyed.

For example, the young Nazi ... talked a great deal about anti-Communism. He also had a lot to say about "freedom." That combination of sentiments, as it happens, has very little to do with authentic Nazism ...

But the combination of anti-Communism and freedom does fit one recognizable political grouping: Modern American Conservatism. In fact, the speech of the young Nazi, in its

of the German Empire, maybe we can alert the public to the menace of "the Hun."

For Rod Serling, this sarcastic broadside was the last straw. He had seen far too many reactionary groups pop up in response to the Civil Rights movement of the early 1960s and had watched too many people like the American Nazi Party's George Lincoln Rockwell and the KKK's Robert Shelton become "media celebrities" to swallow the thesis that modern fascism was nothing to worry about. Serling wrote a long, impassioned reply to the *Star's* editorial, which the news-

that we have other enemies no less real, no less constant and no less damaging to the fabric of a democracy. It's when we hear denials that these people exist and that their poison is being disseminated and that any comment to this effect is irrelevant—I wonder if "The Twilight Zone" isn't something more than a television idea.

And from the Twilight Zone of "last withering blasts" came, after all the controversy had subsided, one last criticism of "He's Alive." At the end of the film, Serling, in his spoken epilogue, wondered where the ghost of Hitler would next surface. Would it be in Syracuse, perhaps, or maybe Vincennes, Indiana? Serling chose "Syracuse" as a possible target because he'd been born in Syracuse. Vincennes was chosen at random, from one of the many small towns Serling had visited during his tenure as a staff writer on a Cincinnati, Ohio, station. There was no further significance to the inclusion of the Indiana town than that—and yet, a viewer in Vincennes wrote to say that he was upset that Serling would designate the city as a potential breeding ground for Nazis. The viewer had no political ax to grind. His letter asked, in effect, "Why pick on us?"

From an offended viewer in a small midwestern town, through a myriad of "nut" groups, and on to a major metropolitan newspaper, Rod Serling had aroused controversy the like of which hadn't been seen since his live-television days. This from a writer who'd been consigned to the has-been heap by a few elitist television critics; this from a television series that was forever threatened with cancellation because its network felt that it didn't have a significant number of viewers.

Although "He's Alive" seems to the modern viewer to pull its punches, some of its controversial aspects still play quite well. And when the disturbing recent upsurge of "pro-American" groups arming themselves against any and all minorities is taken into account, it can be said that we could use a few more dramas like *Twilight Zone's* "He's Alive" today. Perhaps with the relative editorial and dramatic freedom now allowed in television the play would attain the full power that Serling intended. ■

LITTLE HITLERS

purely political aspects, sounded a great deal more like Barry Goldwater, a man of Jewish lineage, than it did like Hitler. The impression left by the program was that people who warn against Communism and people who talk about getting back our freedom are probably secret Nazis.

After itemizing the recent encroachments of Soviet Communism in Vietnam and Africa, as well as recalling the several other recent anti-fascist dramas (among them a 1962 *Defenders* episode featuring Dennis Hopper as yet another latter-day Nazi), the editorial concluded:

For our part, we think the brilliant news analysts who perceive the menace of Nazism in a world strangled by Communism have missed the mark. After all, the Second World War has been over a mere 18 years. Why concentrate on a menace as recently passed as that?

What this country really needs, in the year 1963, is to be educated concerning the dangers of World War One. If enough programs are conducted on this subject, and enough commentary floated suggesting that anti-Communists are agents

paper, to its credit, printed virtually in toto in its February 26 edition.

After assuring the editorialist that he did not intend to lump Mr. Goldwater and the responsible conservatives of America with the Nazis, Serling made his point:

If your editorialist could have read a fraction of the mail received after our production of "He's Alive," I wonder if he would persist in his thesis that communism is a singular enemy and combating it should be our comparably singular preoccupation ... In a sense, we heard from the whole roster of the far right and it's quite a batting order! Their stock-in-trade—indeed, their *raison d'être*—is anti-Communism ... like your editorialist, they seem to feel that racism, bigotry and hatred should be of little concern to us in view of the fact that communists are trying to take over our government, invade our schools and subvert our institutions.

While "association"—however gratuitous and accidental—is, to the far-right, practically a guarantee of guilt—I submit to a more moderate view and choose to believe that your editorial writer is well motivated and quite rightfully dislikes communism and is concerned with subversion. But I submit to him



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He's Alive

Part I of II

by ROD SERLING

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*The original television
script first aired on CBS-
TV January 24, 1963.*

CAST

Peter Vollmer Dennis Hopper
Ernst Ganz Ludwig Donath
Adolph Hitler Curt Conway
Frank Paul Mazursky
Nick Howard Caine
Stanley Barnaby Hale
Heckler Ebernard Fein
Gibbons Jay Adler
Proprietor Wolf Brazell

FADE IN:
1. STANDARD OPENING
DISSOLVE TO:

2. EXTERIOR STREET CORNER CITY NIGHT

As seen from high up on a corner building.

3. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT THERMOMETER

On the side of the building with the temperature well into the nineties. Pan down until we're shooting past the faces of a small crowd of people numbering perhaps thirty or forty. They stand and listen to a shrill, discordant soap-box orator who at this moment is off camera. The camera continues its pan past these faces that range in the spectrum of emotions from an apathetic boiled-out fatigue to a hot, itchy irritation. As the pan continues, we hear bits and pieces of the speaker's voice; high-pitched tail-ends of his harangue with words like "communist conspiracy," "international bankers," and the usual meat-and-potato slogans of the minor demagogue. The pan continues until it's shooting toward the speaker's makeshift platform. In front stand three men (Nick, Stanley, and Frank). Nick is fat, gross-piggish eyes in a fleshy, jowly face. Stanley is tall, thin, bony-faced, with the look almost of an aesthete. Frank is a big man—a weight-lifter with massive arms. And while none of the three are impressive or menacing or even remotely prepossessing, it is what they wear that conjures up memories of another time

and lends a sobriety to the ineffectual rantings that go on above them. They have their arms folded in front of them covering Sam Brown belts, shoulder straps, epaulets, semi-military slate-grey uniforms with bands on their right arms. The bands carry the insignia of the organization: a hand holding a torch. To their left, stuck in the ground, is a flag bearing the same insignia. To their right is an American flag. The camera shoots past these three men up toward the speaker. This is Peter Vollmer, a man in his twenties—feet astride the box, width of the hips apart, thumbs hooked over his wide Sam Brown belt when his hands are not being used to gesture. His voice is untrained, his manner instinctive, his approach that of an amateur who is both unfamiliar with his audience or with the avenues he could use to command it. His voice is shrill and unpleasant—his gestures theatrical.

VOLLMER

The economics of the world—now, then, and forever, have always found an insidious breed of international banker! These are the worshippers of currency whose shrine is gold; whose religion is monetary gain; whose loyal ites—first, foremost, and primarily—are with money and only money. These men are traitors. Seditious traitors. And they are here. They are in Washington. They have long ago captured the prerogatives of government—

He stops and stares down at the audience.

4. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD THE CROWD

Who stare back at him in absolute and utter silence. Pan shot past the faces of the audience again. One man chews popcorn; another smokes a wet soggy cigar; a woman yawns; a couple of teenagers nuzzle one another oblivious to the voice and the personage in front of them; a middle aged woman fans herself while the man alongside wipes a perspiring face.

5. A SHOT OVER THEIR HEADS OF AN ICE CREAM WAGON

As it moves slowly down the street toward the assemblage. It has a tinny little bell that tinkles out a nursery rhyme song. Several people in the crowd turn toward the sound. A small child on the fringe plucks restively at a parental coat and we hear an unintelligible demand for ice cream.

6. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

As he reacts to the interruptions, nervously preoccupied with them. His voice automatically goes up an octave as if trying to drown out the intrusion. His thumbs hook over his Sam Brown belt as he strikes the pose.

VOLLMER

History has left us a definitive chart of cause and effect in the ultimate destruction of a nation. This chart is eminently readable, my friends, if one simply will peruse it. Study it. Analyze the danger signals.

(again a theatrical gesture)

Examine the phenomenon of foreign controls. Examine it and you'll note, with absolute clarity, the lines that lead to Palestine. To Africa. To the Vatican—

7. ANGLE SHOT SHOOTING TOWARD THE CROWD

As a few people move toward the ice cream wagon, and now there are sporadic murmurings in the crowd.

8. ANOTHER ANGLE OF VOLLMER

His lips twitch and his control starts to slip away. His voice now is a shrill discordant wail that borders on petulance and at the same time almost a pleading whine.

VOLLMER

Look ... I'm not asking for anything but your attention. I'm not asking for anything but an awareness on your part of a conspiracy ... an insidious, enveloping conspiracy. A conspiracy personified by yellow men. Black men. Foreigners who come over here to first infiltrate our economy ... then our social structure ... then our entire way of life. And there will come a morning ... there will come a morning when you'll find these men taking over your homes and your daughters. Sitting on, your doorstep—

9. LONG SHOT THE CROWD

As a big ruddy man leaning against a hydrant, takes a cigar out of his mouth and shouts.

MAN (IN THE CROWD) (shouting)

If anybody's sittin' on your doorstep, buddy—he'll be wearin' a white coat. Why don't you go with him quietly? There is sporadic laughter at this.

10. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

His face is a portrait of gall—a sour, festering frustration. He's lost his audience and he knows it. He's about to retort when once again the voice booms out from the crowd.

MAN (IN THE CROWD)

Hey, nutsy—take me to your leader. There is a spontaneous roll of laughter from the crowd. Laughter that feeds on laughter. There has been something

his shoulder as if seeking out an escape route already.

13. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

His face is white and sweaty, his eyes fierce, his voice uncontrolled.

VOLLMER (screaming)

Maybe you're a commie! Maybe that's why what I say doesn't sit so good on you!

14. FULL SHOT THE CROWD FAVORING THE HECKLER

As he steps forward

HECKLER

Do somethin' about it, punk! Go ahead ... you're such a big tough number one tiger—do somethin' about it!

VOLLMER (screaming—beyond any control,



vaguely disquieting about the intense young man and this is a release. The laughter builds and then reaches a peak.

11. CLOSER ANGLE VOLLMER

Now the petulance gives way to pure anger and frustration.

VOLLMER

You think it's funny, don't you? You think it's funny that your country can be sold out ... your birthright ... your flag ... your rights ... all sold out ...

VOICE (FROM THE CROWD)

Hey, kookie—lend me your comb! Again a roar of laughter.

12. MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT THE THREE "ATTENDANTS"

Who look around, disquieted and concerned. The temper of the crowd is changing now. There is an edge to the laughter and they recognize it. They move closer together to form a more solid phalanx in front of Vollmer—though Nick, the fatter of the three, is obviously reluctant and casts some hopeful looks over

wiggling a shaking finger at him) I'm gonna tell you something. I'm gonna tell you something right now! When this country wakes up and they start figuring out how Izzy sold them out and Rastus sold them out and Pancho sold them out ... and they make a list of those who get paid back—you'll be on top, buddy! You hear me? You'll be on the—

15. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

A rotten tomato, flung from the crowd, splatters against his chest. When he looks down another hits him in the face.

16. ANGLE SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER THE CROWD

As they roar with laughter.

17. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD VOLLMER

As now he's one quivering rage. He vaults over the platform, pushing his way through the crowd toward the heckler. The crowd parts for him and the heckler awaits the lunge, steps aside, trips him.

Vollmer lands in a lump on the ground, but before he can get up the heckler has hauled back and planted a well directed shoe against Vollmer's side. Vollmer sprawls on his back.

18. ANGLE SHOT FRANK AND STANLEY

Both of whom start to push their way to his rescue. Stanley is pulled down from behind and disappears behind a crowd. Frank whirls around in time to get a fist directly in his face—then he, too, disappears behind a group of struggling, fighting people. Whip pan over to a:

19. SHOT OF VOLLMER

On his hands and knees, dazed and bleeding. The heckler pulls him halfway up, gives him a knee under the chin, then a left and right—vicious open-palmed swings that almost tear his head off and ultimately fling him backward to land on his back only semi-conscious.

20. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP AT THE HECKLER

Standing over him.

HECKLER

What's the matter, tiger? No more speeches left now? No more big talk? (he bends down and pulls Vollmer half up off the ground by his shirt front)

When you get home, punk—you take a look at yourself in a mirror. You know what you'll see? A scrawny little kook with a big mouth. A big hater so long as you got a few other punks to stand in front of you.

He lets him loose and Vollmer again collapses on the ground.

21. ANOTHER ANGLE THE HECKLER

The anger subsides and with it a realization of what he's done. He looks around a little warily and then disappears into the crowd. There is the sound of a police siren in the distance approaching.

22-25. DIFFERENT SHOTS OF THE CROWD

As they disperse.

26. ANOTHER ANGLE A POLICE CAR

As it pulls to a stop. Two policemen get out and walk toward the corner.

27. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN THE STREET AT NICK

As he runs away.

ANGLE SHOT

28. FRANK AND STANLEY

The former leaning against a building, the other sitting with his head in his hands on the ground, then a pan over to a:

29. SHOT OF VOLLMER

Who slowly gets to his feet, his face torn,

his uniform ripped to pieces.

30. GROUP SHOT THE TWO POLICEMEN

As they approach Vollmer.

POLICEMAN ONE

Some problems, boys, huh?

31. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

As he wipes the blood away with the back of his hand.

VOLLMER

Communists. The communists did this.

The two policemen exchange a look.

POLICEMAN ONE

Which ones, Jack?

VOLLMER

They're all communists. All of them.

POLICEMAN ONE

How about some names? If you want to press charges—we'll need some names.

32. ANOTHER ANGLE STANLEY AND FRANK

Who approach Vollmer and then enter the scene with him. Vollmer looks briefly at the other two then toward the policemen.

VOLLMER

Forget it. We can handle it ourselves.

POLICEMAN ONE

You need medical attention?

VOLLMER

(shakes his head)

We don't need anything.

POLICEMAN ONE

(looks at the other policeman

—shrugs)

Okay.

They stand there and watch Vollmer with his two cronies as they slowly start to walk away. Policeman Two looks off toward the makeshift platform and the flag whose staff has been broken and lies like a rag in the gutter. He walks over to it, lifts it up, turns toward Vollmer and calls out.

POLICEMAN TWO

Hey, Jack!

33. LONG SHOT VOLLMER AND THE OTHER TWO

As they turn toward the policeman.

POLICEMAN TWO

You forgot your ... your "flag."

He lets it loose from his fingers to drop back into the gutter. Frank hurries over, picks it up, almost reverently brushes it off, very carefully rolls it up, then turns toward the policeman.

FRANK

(very softly and intensely)

There'll come a day ... when guys like you will crawl on your belly just to salute this. There'll come a day.

34. CLOSE SHOT POLICEMAN TWO

Who stares down at the flag, then up into Frank's face.

POLICEMAN TWO

Let me know the date, Jack. That

morning I'll cut my wrists!

Frank is about to retort then clamps his mouth shut, walks back over to Vollmer and Stanley who await him and the three men start slowly down the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

35. EXTERIOR ALLEY LONG SHOT FROM THE STREET NIGHT

Looking down into the narrow cul de sac we see fat Nick standing in the shadows, back pressed against the wall. He hears footsteps approaching and flattens himself even harder against the wall, then very cautiously peers out into the light when he hears some mumbled voices and recognizes them. He then steps out into the light completely.

36. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD STANLEY, FRANK, AND VOLLMER

Who walk into the alley. Nick exhales in relief, walks toward them.

37. GROUP SHOT THE FOUR MEN

NICK

(obsequious, his voice gushing, the words tripping over themselves in his anxiety)

Hey, Pete ... Pete ... I'm glad you're okay!

Vollmer looks at him very briefly, walks past him over to the wall where he very slowly sits down, his back against it. Nick follows him over there.

NICK

There musta been eight, ten guys on top of me. It was all I could do to get away—

FRANK

(his voice cutting and incisive)

That took guts, Nick. None of us was that brave. We stood there and we took it.

NICK

(whirls around at him, his voice half petulant—half defensive)

I would'a stayed. I would'a stayed to help Pete—but there was so many—

FRANK

(interrupting him)

Don't tell me, Nick. Tell Pete.

NICK

(whirls around again toward)

You got a mean crowd, Pete. When there's a hot night you always get a mean crowd.

(he looks back toward Stanley and Frank)

I told you guys that. You get a hot night—and then a couple bindle-stiffs in the crowd—and they swing it all the wrong way.

(now back to Vollmer)

Remember when I said that, Pete? Remember when I was tellin' you how everytime there's a hot night—

38. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

His head jerks up.

VOLLMER
(sharply)

All right, Nick! It's done!

39. CLOSE SHOT NICK
Forcing a smile, his lips quivering.
NICK
Sure, Pete. Sure.

**40. GROUP SHOT
THE FOUR MEN
FAVORING VOLLMER**

Sitting on the ground. He slowly reaches up, touches the filth on his face, looks down at it on his fingertips.
VOLLMER
(very softly)

Why?

(he looks up at the three men
who stare down at them, his
voice louder)

Why?

STANLEY

It's like Nick says, Pete—it just takes one or two burns with big mouths—He then clamps his mouth shut unable to hear of anything else.

VOLLMER

I tried hard tonight. I tried so hard.
(he looks from face to face)
I couldn't get through. I couldn't get through to any of them. I . . . I knew what to tell them. I knew what had to be said.

(he shakes his head back and forth)

But I just couldn't . . . I couldn't get it out. I couldn't think of the words.

(he looks down at his torn uniform, feels of the bruise on his face, looks back up toward the three men)

Someday they'll have to listen. Someday . . . someday . . . they'll cheer.

41. CLOSE SHOT FRANK
The look on his face is part awe, part reverence. his voice shakes with emotion.

FRANK

Someday they will, Pete. Just as sure as the sun come up in the morning—they will!

**42. ANOTHER ANGLE
THE THREE MEN**

As they stare down at Vollmer. They wait for a long silent moment, then Frank nudges Stanley, gives him a look, and the three men turn slowly to walk away leaving Vollmer sitting there, his back against the wall.

SERLING'S VOICE

Portrait of a bush league Fuehrer named Peter Vollmer. A sparse little man who feeds off his self-delusions and finds himself perpetually hungry for want of greatness in his diet.

DISSOLVE TO:

**43. SERLING IN A LIMBO SET
SERLING**

And like some goose-stepping prede-

cessors, he searches for something to explain his hunger and to rationalize why a world passes him by without saluting. The something he looks for and finds is in a sewer. In his own twisted and distorted lexicon, he calls it faith—strength—truth.

(a pause)

But in just a moment, Peter Vollmer will play his trade on another kind of corner—a strange intersection in a shadowland called . . . The Twilight Zone.

FADE TO BLACK:

OPENING BILLBOARD
FIRST COMMERCIAL

ACTION ONE

FADE ON:

**44. INTERIOR BROWNSTONE
APARTMENT HOUSE
HALLWAY NIGHT**

A shabby front hall illuminated by a single yellow bulb hanging from the ceiling. The front door opens. Vollmer enters. He pauses by the first floor bannister, his face bloody—hair rumpled, shirt torn—the blood a dry blotch on his face. He looks up toward the top of the stairs. A child comes in the front door, starts toward his own first floor apartment, then stops and stares at Vollmer, who turns away, covering up the bruise on the side of his face, and waits until the child's footsteps disappear; then he looks up again toward the top of the stairs and starts up them.

45. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM

As he goes up, taking off the various paraphernalia and uniform accoutrements as he walks—first the arm band then the tiny tie pin with the insignia of the organization (a hand holding a torch), and then the tie. Halfway up, he's removed the Sam Brown belt and then the shoulder strap. When he reaches the second floor landing, he is unbuttoning his torn shirt. He pauses again for a moment, clutches at the bannister for support, then shoves the arm band, belt, et cetera, into the shirt as if it were like a bag, covers them up, shoves the bundle under his arm, then continues an unsteady walk over to an apartment door. He pauses in front of it, leans against the door jamb and closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, knocks on the door. There are footsteps approaching from the other side and the door opens and we're looking over Vollmer's shoulder toward Ernst Ganz, a man in his indeterminate fifties—obviously older looking than he is—the face seamed and lined, the eyes deep, the hair prematurely white—a collection of years telescoped there suggesting more than a man's rightful share of pain and misery. But the face is a strong one and rather a gentle one with its wisdom and its understanding. He looks very briefly at Vollmer, apparently not at all surprised at what he sees. He gives almost a half nod, steps aside, motions Vollmer into his apartment. Vollmer follows him in. Ganz

closes the door behind him.

CUT TO:

**46. INTERIOR
GANZ'S APARTMENT**

A small room, shabby like the rest of the building but somehow comfortable and not unpleasant. There is a small pullman kitchen adjoining the living room. Ganz motions to Vollmer to sit down, then he walks into the pullman kitchen, takes out a wash cloth, pours water on it and carries it back over to Vollmer, hands it to him.

GANZ

(not ungently)

Wash your face, Peter.

Vollmer takes the wash cloth and dabs ineffectually at his face. Ganz takes the wash cloth from him and finishes the washing, very carefully wiping away the dried blood, then peering at the bruise.

GANZ

(with a half smile)

It's not a mortal wound, Peter. I think you shall survive. When you get home put some iodine on it.
Vollmer stares down at his hands and doesn't say anything.

GANZ

Do you want a cup of coffee?

VOLLMER

(shakes his head, then looks up quickly)

A drink. Could I have a drink, Ernst?

GANZ

I have wine. You want wine?

Vollmer nods. Ganz retraces his steps over to the kitchen, throws the wash cloth in the sink, removes a bottle of wine from the cupboard, pours a small glass and carries it back over to Vollmer who grabs it and then gulps it down.

GANZ

(very softly)

One sips wine, Peter. It's not medicine.

VOLLMER

I'll . . . I'll keep it in mind . . . for the next time.

GANZ

For the next time.

(he takes out a pipe and lights it, then sits down in a chair close to Vollmer.)

How many "next times" do you suppose a human being has in the scheme of things?

VOLLMER

Don't lecture me, Ernst. I'm tired. I'm sick. I've got . . . I've got a bomb inside me that's ready to go off. So please . . . don't lecture me.

GANZ

(makes a gesture, smiles—points to the bruise on Vollmer's face)

Who gave you your badge?

VOLLMER

(staring down at his lap)

Some . . . some drunk.

He looks up at Ganz almost as if expecting some kind of sympathy. Ganz stares at him unsmiling.

VOLLMER

Can I ... can I stay here tonight? I don't dare go back home.

GANZ

(points to the couch)

It remains there for you ... as usual.

47. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

Who studies the other man.

VOLLMER

You're a good friend, Ernst. You're a real good friend—

**48. REVERSE ANGLE
LOOKING TOWARD GANZ**

Who leans forward and with a deceiving swiftness pulls open Vollmer's bundle on his lap.

49. CLOSE SHOT THE BUNDLE

And the arm band in Ganz's hand. The camera pulls back for a:

VOLLMER

Yes. But does it make any difference if we don't ... if we don't think alike about certain things? We're friends, aren't we? We're good friends. You've known me since I was a kid.

53. CLOSE PROFILE SHOT**GANZ**

He lights his pipe very slowly and deliberately but keeps his back to Vollmer.

GANZ

When you were a little kid, Peter, and I used to find you crying at my door late at night ...

(he turns toward him)

I could pity you then.

54. TWO SHOT THE TWO MEN**Vollmer**

And ... now?

... never mind the cause—was twelve million bodies in shallow graves. He sits down close to Vollmer. His voice remains quiet.

GANZ

And it all started with young men in uniforms talking on street corners.

56. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

His voice is almost accusative.

VOLLMER

You let me come. You've never turned me away.

57. TWO SHOT FAVORING GANZ**GANZ**

(very softly)

No, I never did. I never do. The weakness that you scream about on your street corner. The sentimentality. The softness. The weakness that makes a man his brother's keeper. So I must be one of the worst of your criminals, Peter. Weak, sentimental, soft ... and very preoccupied with my brother.

(he rises, his voice tired)

I should close the door on you.

(he looks up into the boy's face)

But perhaps ... this is my sickness.

I see the boy ... not the man.

(another pause)

You know where the blankets are and the extra pillow. Sleep on the couch. He walks across the room toward the door.

**58. ANGLE SHOT OVER GANZ'S
SHOULDER AT VOLLMER**

Who stands up, tears in his eyes. He takes a step toward him, his hands outstretched at his sides.

VOLLMER

Look ... look ... why don't you understand? You're like a father. You're just like a father. You're the only person in the world I feel any ... any love for at all. What have I ever had to love? A drunk father who used to throw me against walls? An old lady without any marbles who didn't even recognize me half the time?

(then, intensely)

That's why I used to ... that's why I used to come over here, Ernst, because ... you were gentle. Because you'd talk to me. Feed me. Take care of me. Ernst ... Ernst, you're my father!

59. CLOSER ANGLE GANZ**GANZ**

(he closes his eyes, nods)

That is the boy again speaking. That's the little boy with so much fear in him. So rest well, boy. That's what you must do. Rest well.

He turns and goes into his bedroom leaving Vollmer standing there stockstill at the sound of the door closing. He turns, his eyes travel to the floor. He suddenly grabs the shirt from the floor and holds it out in his hands staring down at it, then very carefully starts to fold up the cloth-

50. TWO SHOT

As Ganz stares at the arm band and throws it back down on top of the shirt and the rest of the paraphernalia. He rises from the chair.

51. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM

As he walks over to a small desk, taps his pipe into an ashtray there, then refills it from a humidor.

**52. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING
OVER HIS SHOULDER
BACK AT VOLLMER**

Who is perched on the edge of his seat.

VOLLMER

A man ... a man does what he believes in.

GANZ

(very softly)

A man usually does.

VOLLMER

I believe in certain things

GANZ

Is that a fact?

GANZ

What do you think?

(a pause)

Now you peddle hate on street corners as if it were popcorn.

VOLLMER

It isn't hate, Ernst. It's ... it's simply a point of view. It's a philosophy.

55. CLOSE SHOT GANZ

As he studies the younger man.

GANZ

(very softly)

I know the philosophy, Peter. I know it very well. I spent nine years in a place called Dachau praying to God I'd die before each dawn.

(another pause)

You know who put me there?

(he points his pipe stem at Vollmer)

Peter Vollmer. A lot of Peter Vollmers. Hungry men. Frustrated men. Sick men ... but the result ... the effect



ing and then smooths out the arm band. He walks over to the couch and lies down, hands behind his head, staring up at the ceiling. Just once he lets his eyes travel toward the arm band.

CUT TO:

60. INSERT THE LIBERTY BELL

61. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD VOLLMER

Lying on the couch as he stares at the ceiling again. From far off in a hidden portion of his mind is the sound of a screaming mob shouting over and over again. It builds and builds and builds until it is one shrieking morass of noise. The camera moves in for:

62. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER'S FACE

As he smiles and closes his eyes just as if he were listening to a lullaby.

DISSOLVE TO:

63. INTERIOR GANZ'S LIVING ROOM LATE AT NIGHT ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AT A SLEEPING VOLLMER

Whose eyes open, blink a couple of times. He half sits up, listens carefully, looks around warily, then very slowly sits all the way up, then swings his legs over to sit at the edge of the couch. He very slowly rises, looks around him, then walks over to a window facing the front of the apartment.

64. CLOSE PROFILE SHOT VOLLMER

As he stands at the window staring out into the night and the empty streets below. The camera arcs around so that it is shooting over his shoulder down toward the street and then we see what he sees—a shadowy figure who stands alone in the darkness staring up toward the window.

65. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

His eyes grow wide as he stares. His first instinctive reaction is fear and then, following this, his curiosity.

VOLLMER

Who's out there? Who is it?

CUT TO:

66. LONG SHOT DOWN TO THE STREET

Where the man stays in shadow and a man's voice comes back, strangely hollow and distant, carrying with it an indeterminate accent.

MAN'S VOICE

A friend, Mr. Vollmer.

VOLLMER

A friend?

MAN'S VOICE

You have need of friends. Allies.

(a pause)

Come down, Mr. Vollmer. Come down and we'll talk—you and I.

CUT TO:



67. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

As he backs away from the window—unsure, indecisive, but his curiosity still aroused.

68. ANOTHER ANGLE OF HIM

As he turns, walks very quietly to the door, opens it carefully, goes outside.

CUT TO:

69. INTERIOR HALLWAY ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN THE STAIRS

As Vollmer walks down the steps toward the first floor landing.

CUT TO:

70. EXTERIOR STREET NIGHT

Vollmer comes out of the door and stands for a moment staring out into the darkness.

71. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER

At the shrouded figure who remains in the shadows.

MAN

Hello, Mr. Vollmer.

VOLLMER

Who are you? How did you know where I was?

MAN

(laughs)

I simply followed your tears, Mr. Vollmer.

72. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

His face freezes.

VOLLMER

You said you had something to talk about—

MAN

I do. I do, indeed. I have you to talk about. And the things you believe in ... which are the things I believe in as well. Your success, Mr. Vollmer ... will be my success.

VOLLMER

(warily)

Go on.

MAN

Let us start by your learning what are the dynamics of a crowd. How do you move a mob, Mr. Vollmer? How do you excite them? How do you make them feel as one with you?

VOLLMER

(very softly)

How?

MAN

Join them first, Mr. Vollmer. When you speak to them, speak to them as if you were a part of the mob. Speak to them in their language. On their level. Make their hate your hate. Look for their weaknesses and play on them. Find what it is that sets them off—and put a fire under that thing. If they are poor ... talk to them about poverty. If they're afraid ... talk to them about their fears. And if they're angry, Mr. Vollmer ... If they're angry, give them objects for anger. But the important thing, Mr. Vollmer ... the thing that is of most the essence ... is that you make this mob an extension of

yourself! Say things like ... say things like ... "They call us hate mongers. They say we're prejudiced. They say we're biased. They say we hate the minorities."

(a pause)

The minorities! Understand the term, neighbors—minorities. Should I tell you who the minorities are? Shall I tell you?

(then shrieking it out)

We are the minorities!

(a pause)

That way, Mr. Vollmer. Start it that way.

The camera is shooting up toward Vollmer, his face illuminated by the lamplight. He lets it sink in then nods.

VOLLMER

I understand. I think I understand ... Neighbors ... neighbors—they call us hate mongers. They say we're prejudiced ... they say we're biased ...

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

73. INTERIOR MEETING HALL AN EXAGGERATED SHOT LOOKING UP TOWARD VOLLMER NIGHT

Just winding up a speech on the podium. And now we're getting a sense of the man's new power.

VOLLMER

(sweating, his tie pulled down, but now in command)

... so there you have it, neighbors. They call us hate mongers. They say we're prejudiced. They say we're biased. They say we hate the minorities.

(a pause)

The minorities! Understand the term, neighbors—minorities.

(he leans forward, fists clenched)

Shall I tell you who the minorities are? (then, shrieking it out)

We are the minorities! Because patriotism is the minority. Because love of country is the minority. Because to live in a free white America seems to be a minority opinion. Let me tell you something, neighbors ... and dwell on this. Dwell on it. We had an atom bomb ... and suddenly the Russians had it. We wanted to send men into space ... but it was the Russians who sent them up first. We had a hydrogen bomb ... but it was the Russians who exploded theirs.

(now, shouting again)

Who gave them the bombs? Who sold us out? Who stabbed us in the back? Well, if it's the minority opinion that we have to survive ... then we are the minority. And this minority will not rest until it's the majority. This minority will not give up the fight until once again it can rise up with its head high—strong and clean and right. This is the promise ... and this is the legacy, so help me God!

At this moment there is a roar from the crowd—an animal roar. The kind of instinctive impulsive emotional reaction that men get when a nerve has been prodded.

74. ANOTHER ANGLE THE PLATFORM

As men rush to surround Peter Vollmer and he's engulfed by back-slappers and hand-shakers and well-wishers. Some of the men wear grey uniforms and the arm bands, and Vollmer quickly receives them like a potentate. His smile is a thin mettle worn on a satisfied face.

FADE TO BLACK:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE ON:

75. INTERIOR MEETING HALL NIGHT FULL SHOT THE ROOM

As Vollmer is still surrounded by well-wishers.

76. SHOT OF CORRIDOR

Outside the meeting hall where we can see the commotion still going on inside. A small, portly, harried man (Gibbons) paces back and forth, drumming his fingers together. We see a uniformed man climb up on the platform and call for silence. At the same time, Vollmer pushes his way past knots of people and starts out into the corridor. Over his shoulder the man on the platform holds up his hands.

STANLEY

Can I have your attention, please, friends? Can I please have your attention? We're going to give Peter Vollmer a few moments to relax and then he'll be back to talk to us some more and tell us of the organization's plans. In the meantime, just relax and talk amongst yourselves. Talk about the things you've heard here tonight.

77. CLOSER ANGLE VOLLMER AND HIS THREE CRONIES

As they come out into the corridor. Gibbons moves directly to them.

GIBBONS

Look, I'm not gonna wait no longer—understand?

(with a look toward the others as if expecting cooperation immediately—a ritual with them) C'mon, Gibbons. Let it keep for an hour. We're very busy now.

GIBBONS

It ain't gonna keep for an hour. It ain't gonna keep for another five minutes. I want it settled now. I told yuh—no dough, no rental. No dough, no use of the hall. I ain't runnin' this place because of the pleasure it gives me—you can believe me.

VOLLMER

(serenely)

What's the problem?

NICK

(with exaggerated concern) Oh, this is a hungry man here, Pete. Such a hungry man. Gotta have his shackles.

(he wiggles his fat fingers

grotesquely)

Gotta have his li'l ol' money.

GIBBONS
(flushing)

I been tellin' you guys you're three weeks back on the rent for the hall. You told me I'd get it a week ago. And all I did get was cigarette butts on the floor.

VOLLMER

(still very serene)

I'm to understand then, Mr. Gibbons, that you want to lock us out of the hall because of a couple of weeks of lousy rent?

GIBBONS

You understand right. Two hundred bucks due—and two hundred bucks ain't received.

FRANK

How about a collection—

GIBBONS

(interrupting)

Never mind the collection. We want that route last week. You gave me twelve bucks on account. That don't put a ripple in the stream, pal. I could'a rented the hall out a dozen times while I'm waitin' for you guys and your collections.

78. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

His face still unperturbed. He jerks his thumb in the direction of the open door.

VOLLMER

Did you hear that out there tonight, Mr. Gibbons?

Gibbons

I heard—I heard! I can't put noise in the bank, Vollmer.

VOLLMER

You'd be surprised, Mr. Gibbons, how important that noise is. Or perhaps you don't believe in our movement?

79. PAN SHOT ACROSS THE FACES OF FRANK, NICK, AND STANLEY

Who wait expectantly for a response.

80. CLOSE SHOT GIBBONS

He eyes the men around him nervously, wets his lips.

GIBBONS

Look, Vollmer—this ain't got nothin' to do with politics. I don't care if you was the Townsend Plan or the Associated Chicken Pluckers of America. You pay the money and you get the hall. And what you do in the hall is your own business. But I gotta get paid. It's as simple as that.

VOLLMER

It isn't as simple as that. We happen to be a young movement. We're still struggling. We need time to grow.

GIBBONS

I don't rent time. I just rent the hall. Now, it's the money—or you guys better fix up a platform in the park.

81. ANOTHER ANGLE THE GROUP

As Gibbons walks away from them.

NICK

(nervously)

What do we do, Pete? I mean ... we gotta do something.

FRANK

(flexes an arm and sticks out a fist)

I don't know why we walk tip-toe with this guy. Why don't I just educate him? I could do that, Pete—I guarantee it!

82. SHOT OF THE DOUBLE DOORS

As a man comes out, his eyes searching and finding Vollmer. He walks over to him, hands him an envelope.

STANLEY

Somebody left this for you, Pete. Vollmer looks down at the envelope.

VOLLMER

Who?

STANLEY

Nobody saw him. It was just left at the door. Your name's on it.

Vollmer looks down, opens the envelope, take out two bills.

NICK

(wide-eyed, grabs Vollmer's wrist)

Two "C" notes.

(then to Vollmer)

Ain't that wild? We needed two hundred bucks rent—and here it is!

VOLLMER

(to the man)

Anybody see who it was?

(he taps on the envelope)

Anybody get a look at whoever left this?

STANLEY

(heading back into the hall)

I don't think so, Pete. Message was that you were to get it, that's all.

Vollmer looks down at the money, whirls around at Gibbons who is tacking things on a bulletin board at the far end of the hall.

VOLLMER

(shouts)

Hey, Gibbons!

83. LONG SHOT OVER VOLLMER'S SHOULDERS OF GIBBONS

As he turns around.

VOLLMER

Come and get it.

Gibbons, with a broad smile, starts to walk toward Vollmer, a hand outstretched. Vollmer lets the money drop to the floor, turns abruptly and walks down toward the opposite end of the corridor toward a fire escape door that leads to an alley.

CUT TO:

84. EXTERIOR ALLEY NIGHT

As Vollmer walks out flanked by the other three men. He takes out a cigarette. Nick lights it for him.

FRANK

Where'd the dough come from, Pete? Any idea?

Vollmer doesn't answer. He draws deeply on the cigarette, blows the smoke out, and just stands there.

STANLEY

(looks at him with a kind of

awe)

You were great tonight, Pete. You were really something. I can't ... I can't describe how it sounded.

(he holds out his hand)

There they were. Right in the palm.

The men smile amongst themselves with a kind of collective pride and look expectantly toward Vollmer who remains silent for a moment, then takes a final drag and flicks the cigarette away into the alley. He turns toward Frank.

VOLLMER

(with a crooked grin)

Yeah, Frank—we're gonna make it.

Now we're gonna make it!

FRANK

(grins, winks)

You bet your life!

Vollmer turns and walks back into the building. The other three follow him.

DISSOLVE TO:

85. INTERIOR CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OF THE HALL NIGHT

We see the last groups of people leaving. Frank and Stanley walk toward Nick who joins them.

NICK

Pete says we should wait outside for him.

The two men nod and all three go down the hallway toward the alley door and then exit.

CUT TO:

86. INTERIOR HALL

As the audience lights go off leaving a single spot shining on the platform.

87. HIGH ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN ON VOLLMER

As he sorts papers together, scribbles a few notes.

88. CLOSER ANGLE OF HIM

As he slowly looks up, a look of questioning on his face. He peers out toward the dark recesses of the auditorium.

89. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER

Toward the darkened hall. The place is completely quiet.

VOLLMER

(his voice echoing strangely in the silent naked room)

Who's out there? Somebody out there?

90. ANOTHER ANGLE SHOOTING ACROSS THE EMPTY CHAIRS

Toward the last row where we see the shadowy figure of the man in silhouette sitting in one of the chairs.

MAN

(with the same unrevealing accent)

An excellent performance, Mr. Vollmer. Very effective. You learn quickly.

VOLLMER

Thanks.

(a pause)

But I'd like to know ... I'd like to know who I'm thanking.

MAN

It doesn't make very much difference. I'm just pleased I could be of help. You learned the style very well. You delivered it precisely as I told you.

VOLLMER

(a little bit discomfited)

I'm obliged.

(another pause)

And the money?

MAN

The least I could do, Mr. Vollmer. We couldn't have you thrown out into the streets. I happen to feel that your work is very important.

91. CLOSER ANGLE VOLLMER

As he peers out into the darkness.

VOLLMER

Are you ... are you one of us?

92. LONG SHOT TOWARD THE SHADOWY FIGURE

MAN

One of you? Mr. Vollmer ... you might say that ... I am you. I predated you. In a manner of speaking ... I gave birth to you.

(a pause)

Now I have some suggestions. I'll continue to give you some speeches but there's another item of importance that has to be taken care of.

VOLLMER

What's that?

MAN

An expedient, Mr. Vollmer. Or you might call it ... a cause celebre. Something to cement the organization together.

VOLLMER

I don't understand—

MAN

A martyr, Mr. Vollmer. The organization needs a martyr.

VOLLMER

A martyr?

(a pause, his voice slightly shaking)

How? How do you find a martyr?

There is a low arch from the far point of the hall.

MAN

You don't find one, Mr. Vollmer. You choose one. You pick out the one of least value. And you turn him into a symbol. You wrap him in a flag. You make his death work for you.

(a pause)

Find a man, Mr. Vollmer, who has no worth while alive ... but who can serve you when he's dead. Is there someone?

93. CLOSE SHOT

As this sinks in. He suddenly turns abruptly to stare toward the open doors.

94. LONG SHOT THE DOORS

As Nick come through—fat, fumbling, obsequious.

NICK
(looking around)
Pete? The boys are waiting.

95. CLOSER ANGLE VOLLMER
Who stares at Nick, then toward the rear of the auditorium.

VOLLMER
Yeah, Nick. I'll be right there.

96. CLOSE SHOT NICK
He holds out his hand in a salute—a grotesque, idiotic gesture.

NICK
Right, Pete. I'll be outside.
(he turns then stops, turns again back toward Vollmer)
You talkin' to somebody?

97. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER
On the platform. His face is suddenly beaded with sweat. His eyes go down. He's obviously struggling convulsively with a decision that has to be made. He looks up abruptly and calls out.

VOLLMER
(calling out)
Hey, Nick! Tell ... tell Frank to come in here. Alone.

98. LONG ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AT NICK
Who is always so anxious to please that he can hardly get out fast enough.

NICK
Sure thing, Pete. Right away.
He hurries out the hallway door. The camera pans back over for a:

99. SHOT OF VOLLMER
Who stands there motionless, then forces his eyes up to stare out across the hall.

100. LONG SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDERS THE HALL
The figure is still visible in the shadowy rear.

MAN
Excellent, Mr. Vollmer. An excellent choice.

101. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD VOLLMER
Down the center aisle.

VOLLMER
(his voice shaking now)
I ... I don't know. It's just ... it's
(he stops, shakes his head)
I was just thinking that maybe there's some other way—

MAN
Some other way?
(his voice suddenly rises)
There is no other way, Mr. Vollmer. And if you soften up ... if you weaken ... there's no point in going on. When Frank comes in, tell him that you've discovered an informer. Tell him the informer has done you irreparable damage. Tell him the informer must be put away. But put away cleverly, Mr. Vollmer. Put away subtly. Put away so that there is some



question as to ... who is responsible.

102. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER
His features work.

VOLLMER
Nick ... Nick's been around since the beginning.

MAN
(there is suddenly a tension to his voice—an excitement—a fervor that we've not heard before)
From the beginning? Oh, no, Mr. Vollmer—none of you were there at the beginning. None of you.
There is suddenly the sound of footsteps ringing hollowly on the concrete outside as they approach the double doors leading to the hall. Vollmer whirls around to face the rear of the auditorium.

VOLLMER
Nick ... Nick's my friend.

MAN
And this is an act of friendship. We're allowing him to serve the cause.

103. LONG SHOT THE DOUBLE DOORS
As they open and Frank enters. He looks around briefly then up toward the platform.

FRANK
Nick says you wanted to see me, Pete.

104. ANGLE SHOT OVER FRANK'S SHOULDER VOLLMER
On the platform.

VOLLMER
We've got a stoolie in the group, Frank.

FRANK
A stoolie?
VOLLMER
Nick's been talking. I think the police hired him.

FRANK
(appalled)
Nick? Nick's done that?

VOLLMER
I know it to be a fact. Everything we've done ... everything we've said ... Nick's been telling.

105. CLOSE SHOT FRANK
The features set.

FRANK
What do we do, Pete?

106. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP AT VOLLMER
Who seems to loom over the room. He leans forward on the platform.

VOLLMER
What do we do, Frank?
There is a silence between the two men.

107. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD FRANK

FRANK
(very softly)
You tell me, Pete. That's all that's required. You just tell me.

108. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD VOLLMER
VOLLMER

Get rid of him, Frank. Get rid of him so it looks like ... it looks like somebody else has gotten rid of him. Someone who hates us.

109. CLOSE SHOT FRANK
FRANK

I understand. I understand, Pete.
(he looks up toward Vollmer, his face a grim mask of determination and reverence)
You call it, Pete—you got it!

110. ANOTHER ANGLE OF HIM
As he turns and walks back through the hall's double doors.

CUT TO:



**111. ANOTHER ANGLE
VOLLMER**

On the platform. He waits until the sound of the footsteps have disappeared, then he turns to face the rear of the hall. He looks around briefly, frowns, and then moves out of the light to the very edge of the proscenium, scanning the darkness.

VOLLMER

Who are you anyway? When will we see you?

**112. LONG SHOT OVER HIS
SHOULDER OF THE EMPTY
HALL**

The figure is no longer there.

VOLLMER

Hey, Hey—you still out there?

**113. HIGH ANGLE SHOT
LOOKING DOWN AT
VOLLMER**

As he jumps from the platform and runs the length of the hall to the rear seats, looking left and right as does so.

CUT TO:

114. BACK AREA OF THE HALL

As Vollmer gets there. It's empty.

115. CLOSER ANGLE VOLLMER

As he looks around, then very slowly turns and retraces his steps back to the platform.

116. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM

As he walks. Just before he reaches the platform, he pauses and very slowly turns to a bank of pictures on one wall near the

platform. They are pictures of several of the members of the organization including himself, and then to their right are pictures of several of the old Nazi hierarchy—Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, and Benito Mussolini.

**117. ANOTHER CLOSER
ANGLE VOLLMER**

As he walks over to the picture of Hitler. It's the historic portrait in three quarter pose, the thumbs over the belt. Vollmer unconsciously begins to mimic the pose, sticking his own thumbs through his belt. There is suddenly a loud piercing raucous laugh from the back of the hall.

CUT TO:

118. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

As he whirls around to stare toward the laugh.

CUT TO:

**119. LONG SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER
TOWARD THE EMPTY
ROOM**

CUT TO:

120. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

As he turns very slowly, looks toward the pictures, then moves back toward the platform, walks up the steps, stands on the podium, looks out at the empty room and simply waits.

DISSOLVE TO:

**121. EXTERIOR STREET
LATE AT NIGHT**

A prowling car screeches to a sirened stop. Two policemen get out hurriedly and run

toward the mouth of an alley as night time strollers start to collect.

CUT TO:

**122. CLOSE SHOT
THE POLICEMEN**

As they arrive at a prostrate figure lying on his face.

**123. ANGLE SHOT OVER THE
POLICEMEN'S SHOULDERS**

As one of them kneels down and turns the body over. There is Nick looking up, glassy-eyed and dead. A note has been pinned to his coat, and on it, it reads, A GOOD FASCIST.

DISSOLVE TO:

**124. INTERIOR MEETING HALL
LONG ANGLE SHOT
LOOKING DOWN AT
VOLLMER NIGHT**

Sitting alone in the front row. There are footsteps echoing again outside, then the double doors open.

125. ANGLE SHOT VOLLMER

As he turns to stare toward the double doors, then walks out to meet Frank, who stands there in the corridor.

FRANK

Hey, Pete.

(a long pause)

Cross off the far one.

**126. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER
VOLLMER**

I will.

FRANK

Anything else?

VOLLMER

(shakes his head)

I'll see you later.

FRANK

Right.

He turns and retraces his steps down the corridor. Vollmer stands there for a silent moment, then walks through the double doors back into the hall.

127. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM

As he walks up to the platform, faces the empty audience, his eyes sweeping the seats left and right, his face suddenly looking triumphant—full of strength, accomplishment, resolve.

VOLLMER

We ... now ... all of us ... have a martyr!

(then shouting and pounding his fist on the podium)

We have a martyr!

A slow pan back to the audience as we hear the strange echoey sound of a single man applauding.

**128. AN EXTREMELY LONG
SHOT TOWARD THE
SHADOWY FIGURE**

Who stands at the back of the room clapping his hands.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK:

END ACT TWO

(TO BE CONTINUED)

They're here, they're different, and they're bad.

A number of very earnest films showed up this time around, but none of them, for all their obvious sincerity, for all their hard work and genuine ingenuity and good intentions, really worked.

The most successful of them was **Nomads**, written and directed by John McTiernan, which plays with the always potentially strong fantasy ploy that there is a strange and evil race which dwells among us, and has preyed upon us for eons without any but a tiny number of us ever becoming aware they live within our midst.

The ancient evildoers in **Nomads** are Eskimo demons who have somehow wandered to Southern California and taken the guise of punk bikers—metal-studded, black-leather gear, fancy chop haircuts, and "Look, Maw, I'm dying!" make-up—except that the nasty little group the film centers on favors riding around in a snappy little van with louvers on the windows.

Driven by a callous society (the central thesis of the movie is that Los Angeles is every bit as much a primitive settlement as a thatched village in the lower Amazon, and I'd hate to be the one who had to refute it), these creatures of magical prowess have committed their rather repetitious depredations on the poor humans who have been unfortunate enough to catch their eye. No one is the wiser until Pierce Brosnan, who plays a famous French anthropologist, happens to spot them on account of—and it's a cute touch—his special training and experience as an observer of savage tribes.

The Eskimo demons come on with the panache of Charlie Manson, writing things like PIGS and BLOOD on Brosnan's freshly rented canyon house, and, scientifically intrigued, the anthropologist grabs his camera, goes on the stalk and, of course, learns more than man was meant to know.

We learn what he learned via flashbacks in the head of a very pretty, LA doctor played by Lesley-Anne Down. How she believes these revelations and what she does with them



Christopher Lambert swashing it up in *Highlander*.

is well done, by Down and the film at large. In fact, the whole thing is well done, with an intelligent, complex plot, and is full of clever shocks and nice ironies, but, in spite of buckets of blood and a fine helping of sad-masochistic foolery, the film somehow never really whacks you on the side of the head. It's all too remote and intellectual; you neither jerk nor jump. And when you go to movies like this you are *supposed* to jump.

Highlander stars the up and coming Christopher Lambert as a near-immortal, one of a race of immortals who, like the Eskimo chapies above, have dwelt among a lavishly unobservant humanity for years.

Just exactly why Lambert and his fellow immortals are immortals is never made quite clear, but then quite a lot about this movie is not made clear. The film is stylish, but I'm afraid it never does make too much sense, and, of course, if you're doing a fantasy it most desperately must make sense—within its parameters—if it's to be believed.

However, with a cape twirler like Lambert and, better yet, one like Sean Connery, the viewer can be entirely pardoned if he is swept away by the sheer bravado of the thing, and there is much fun had with mysterious clashes of ancient swords in underground parking lots and an excellent evocation of a barbaric Scot-

tish village of nearly Macbethian times. And, by no means least, we have yet another barb-studded, black-leathered bully, this one played with villainous authority by Clancy Brown, who holds the fearsome scar across his neck shut by means of high-punk safety pins, and delights in snuffing out supplicants' candles in Catholic churches. Who could resist the likes of a rogue such as that?

But don't ask for a clear explanation of what these bold and dashing fellows are up to. They are some sort of royalty, the last two of whom do penultimate battle to lead (advise?) humanity. You and me. The little people. Got it? And, of course, the fight is between the best and the worst of them. You root for Lambert—since nobody who's not into slave games would want to be ruled by Clancy Brown.

One notable aspect of the film is the screaming of Roxanne Hart as a lovely metallurgical (sic) expert who becomes romantically involved with Lambert. During the above-mentioned penultimate battle she is ensconced on the huge, red WONDER BREAD sign that shines on Manhattan from across the river and in shot after shot of her, with the Empire State Building over her shoulder, she does her valiant best to outdo Fay Wray. I'm afraid all it does is set your mind to making comparisons not particularly favorable to *Highlander*. ■

GAHAN WILSON'S WEIRD WEEKEND

*Wilson, King, and Straub camp it up
in the Catskills.*

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by
**GAHAN
WILSON**

Nowadays you can buy murders attractively boxed with complete instructions for the suspects and a full set of clues and red herrings for the sleuths at your friendly local bookstore. Bring home one of these sinister little kits, take as directed, and you and your friends can pass a pleasant and diverting evening by staging a pretend homicide and then solving it. It's fun, it's simple, and no one really gets hurt.

It was not always so easy to hold a harmless little killing; indeed the whole odd notion of murder for fun is a relatively new one. The first fantasy slaughter was committed at a legendary den of unbridled rusticity, Mohonk Mountain House, a vast, rambling hotel built in the late 1800s, a sort of monument to Currier and Ives posh. It is a huge, multi-towered lair erected for nature lovers of the Teddy Roosevelt school who, when they were identifying wildflowers or taking hearty hikes, liked to rock on vast porches or sit in view-commanding gazebos as they sipped strictly non-alcoholic lemonades.

The old place lends itself well to mysterious goings-on, for though it's still thoroughly open and very much in business, you know its heart is in the past. The bearded portraits lining its labyrinthine halls, the gas lamp era fixtures only grudgingly adapted to electricity, the dark woodwork, the turreted gothic rooftops—all these conspire firmly to evoke images from spooky old movies about spooky old houses where wills are read by doomed lawyers to sinister beneficiaries while brooding butlers eavesdrop and plot what to put in the tea. For this reason, and because it is clearly commercially profitably, Mohonk was the site of choice for the first murder-for-fun. It has also profitably remembered that event by an annual celebration of a new and different slaughter ever since.

The present host and creator of the Mohonk Mystery Weekends is Donald E. Westlake. Westlake is, as you probably know, the author of any number of successful mystery novels, usually with a nice, whacky twist, and he is a skilled lurer-in of participants for mystery weekends. After comparing notes with my fellow participants Stephen King and Peter Straub, we came to the tentative

*Dastardly Doc Wilson and his
disabled assistant, David Duffield.*



Vampires Katherine Duffield, Peter Straub, and Susan Newman.

recollection that Westlake had called all of us with the information that the other two had already accepted his invitation and would be present; of course, that's impossible since one of us had to be the first one he called, but the invitation had been made over a year ago, another sly, Westlakian maneuver: anything taking place that far along down the road seems unreal so you figure what the hell, why not?

It was, therefore, with a little more than mild foreboding that I approached Mount Mohcnk House, slouched in the back seat of the car they had sent to get me. I was having second thoughts and even occasional third ones.

The drive up had been smooth enough, but as the car simultaneously drove into thicker and thicker fog and ever deeper into upstate New York I realized, with a little start of horror, that I was in genuine Lamont Cranston and Margo Lane territory! How often had Margo and Lamont prowled this area in various episodes of *The Shadow* in just this kind of foul weather, only to find themselves lost and knocking at the door of an isolated mansion containing a waiting mad scientist, or an insane murderer lusting for fresh victims? Very often, was the answer. Loads of times.

The twisted trees in the fields beside the road began to grow ever harder to discern because of the thickening fog and the steepness of the road grew more pronounced as we neared our goal. When we passed the guardhouse—somehow I didn't too much like the look of that guardhouse—the fog was positively Disneyan in its opacity, and I thought again and again of the witch in *Snow White* falling to her death

from high mountains through dank clouds to the amusement of circling vultures.

Now even the driver—who had, up to now, been determinedly cheerful—began to show signs of unease. After we had rounded a particularly terrifying, almost invisible curve about the lip of a bottomless abyss, he turned and admitted in an awed tone of voice that one generally had a grand view of the building's towers from where we were. When we arrived at the actual entrance to the building, and it still remained entirely shrouded from view, he was reduced to mute shakings of his head.

I stepped into the murk on faith, assuming that there actually was a building there and, sure enough, I eventually found myself in a large, rustic lobby full of bulletin boards festooned with announcements and schedules and instructions concerning the mystery weekend. I made my way to the desk, announced myself and, after being given armfuls of envelopes and folders, was led to my room.

My quarters were both spartan and comfortable in the true Teddy Roosevelt tradition. The rugged fireplace contained huge, ideally seasoned logs, there were little rocking chairs on a tiny porch, the bed was covered with chintz, and a stark, erstwhile gas lamp hung from the ceiling exactly as it had back in the days of Woodrow Wilson.

Among the papers were my instructions, and they certainly sounded ominous. The game was titled *Transylvania Station*, the special stationery printed up for it featuring bats and tiny stills from old horror films. I was to pretend to be the sinister Doctor Frankenstein, a fellow

clearly designed to create the impression of being another Frankenstein, but who, if questioned cleverly enough, would reveal himself to be a sleazy crook.

Westlake had provided me with this unsavory character's entire case history, and clearly expected me to have it down sufficiently to be able to face not one, but two mass interrogations—I checked the accompanying schedule in hopes I had misunderstood, but I had not—tomorrow. Another note informed me I was almost late for a party being held for the cast participants, so I adjusted my ascot, trying to get that David Niven pop to it, and made my way to Westlake's quarters.

More facets became clear over the general hubbub. Steve King was going to be Barry Talmud, a werewolf—a pretend werewolf, mind you, since all the characters in the game were meant only to seem truly gothic. Peter Straub was to play the mysterious Hungarian Count Alucard, and if you took the time to spell his name backward and figured he was a vampire, then you had been successfully misled.

There were many other characters, some played by actual actors instead of authors or cartoonists. The two most important to me as the tricky doctor were my lovely fiancée, Clara (our two characters were, in reality, a confidence team), portrayed by Susan Lohman, and my hunch-backed assistant, played by David Duffield.

I had never met Westlake, who turned out to be a relaxed yet intense fellow of considerable charm,

A writer in werewolf's clothing, Stephen King.



WEIRD WEEKEND

at once the weekend's author, director, and producer. He moved among us, alternately flashing confident smiles and anxious glances of despair, depending on our comprehension—or lack thereof.

The next event was an elaborate and clever little slide show put on in the auditorium. One could easily imagine Doctor Knox doing demonstration dissections of cadavers in the strange old place. Here, for the first time, I saw our detectives-to-be in a group, some *three hundred* of them, and an eager lot they looked to be. I clutched my Doctor Frankenstein fact sheet a little tighter.

The slide show, with Westlake reading his rhymed narration, told of the librarian Joseph Gawker's arrival in foreboding Transylvania in order to catalogue the castle library of Count Alucard, and of how, after meeting the Count's eerie daughter Primeva (Kathleen Duffield), his ailing ward Lily Languish (Dorena Hart), and an extraordinarily sinister gypsy named Madame Opensky lurking in an armoire (Gloria Hoyer), among others, he was, alas, *murdered!* But by whom? Ah ha—there was the mystery!

From the slide show we trooped to dinner where we found the menu bat-encrusted and loaded with such items as Blood Soup, Grisly Greens, Freshly Drawn & Quartered Pineapple, and (sigh!) PETER STRAUberries.

The guests at the mystery weekend were divided into competing groups with names such as the Szygany Smilers, the Greafull Udead, and the Roumanian Ruins. Fifteen of them in all, and, clever little titles to one side, each one grimly determined to come up with at least one of the two prize-winning goals: The Most Accurate Solution (track down all the clues, see through the characters' various evasions, and, hopefully, even figure out whodunnit) and The Most Creative Solution (who cares whodunnit—come up with the most entertaining and imaginative fantasy based on your impression of what you've seen).

Realizing the extreme seriousness with which all this was being taken, I snuck off to my rustic little room early on so that I might study my Frankenstein fact file. It would not do if I did not know that when my laboratory assistant, Eeyore, came lurching barefoot into the parlor crying: "Master, it's alive!" he was referring to a peach fungus I was attempting to grow in the basement which I hoped would, if spread on human skin, give it the texture and softness of peach skin; it would not do at all.

The next morning was a busy one for me as I had to give a little speech with slides of my cartoons which culminated in a rousing account of a trip I took to Transylvania wherein I survived (just) a landslide in the Carpathian Mountains, and made it to the Borgo Pass (all interested parties may contact my lecture bureau), before trotting off with the rest of the suspects to a hidden room wherein we were all costumed and made up for our parts. Modesty aside, I must say we made a very credible bunch of miscreants.

Straub was without doubt the most sinister, in his long black cape, his face and dome a pallid, corpse hue, and his lips a livid purple, but King's make-up featured what was clearly the oddest and most unusual touch. Both his hands were covered with long hair in the best Lon Chaney, Jr., tradition. My own appearance was quite mild by comparison, but I sneakily managed to get hold of a liner and, appearance by appearance, added just a trace more shadow under the eyes, just a slightly more satanic bent to the eyebrows' outer corners.

The lot of us were then bundled off to various parts of the huge old building (it is actually a kind of glued-together rustic city rather than one structure and, viewed from a distance, looks like an American turn-of-the-century fantasy of a medieval hill town) so that we might be quizzed by the investigators.

My chief regret in the whole business is that, being one of the suspects, I was not able to wander around and watch the other suspects at work. How I would have loved to see how Peter fended off increasingly eager queries about his missing lunatic brother Perffy (Perffy was the actual count, a homicidal maniac

kept locked for over twenty years in a hidden tower room) or listen in on Steve explaining why he had been so determinedly avoiding the mysterious Madame Opensky (she is trying to serve him with divorce papers since he insists she read tea leaves in New York!)

Myself, I decided to adopt a French accent since my fraudulent doctor operated from a clinic in Nice, and since it seemed an unfair red herring to drag over the trail leading to the fact I was actually an American con man. I must say the questioning really went quite well as the detectives slowly but surely got my nasty secrets one by one until, despite my evasions and brushings-off (it is forbidden a suspect to lie about anything except, of course, whether he is or is not the murderer), they came closer and closer to discovering my sinister secret and possible motive for killing poor old Joseph Gawker: he knew I was not really a doctor and could blow up my profitable deal with the Count!

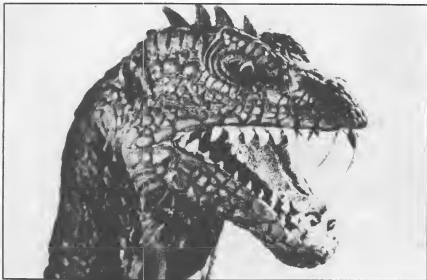
Eventually a sharp question chipped away one edge of my cover story, a second got the other, and a third follow-up hit spang-on dead center. I looked this way and that, glowered, hunched, and when I admitted the ghastly truth was delighted to hear a genuine gasp of shock at my depravity come involuntarily from my questioners. A great moment. A really swell one, which I shall treasure henceforth.

The final clue session was a seance in which Madame Opensky used her psychic talents to bring the spirit of Joseph Gawker back from the grave. And, though this solemn occasion was marred by periodic bursts of hilarity, the detectives all seemed pleased at the information they'd garnered and retired to their cubbyholes to organize their solutions for evaluation on the morrow.

Perhaps the hardest task we had was the judging. We did the best we could, and *perhaps* we ended by choosing the best.

On cue, this last day, the fog had gone and the sky altogether cleared; we villains went out into the sunlight and, before we parted, played croquet. Not a very scary scary thing for monsters to do, perhaps, but fun. But then, so was the whole thing. ■

Just when you thought it was safe to turn on your VCR—Beach Party Monster Movies



The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms—an early rubber ducky.

Ah, summertime! The sun, the sand, the sea, the surf. There's nothing like it. But, once again this summer, sun lovers, water skiers, scuba divers, and beach bums will be faced with that perennial question: What do you do on a rainy day?

Allow me to suggest that this summer you put away the cards and poker chips, the Monopoly boards, and the model airplanes. Instead, get out your VCR, run down to the video store, and put together your own Beach Party Monster Movie Film Festival. In some ways, an indoor summer video festival is even better than really going to the beach. You can still get the sun, the sand, the sea, and the surf, and you don't run the risk of sunburn. You don't even have to get wet.

The Beach Party Monster Movie—or the BPMM, for short—has a long if not always glorious history. Back in the fifties and early sixties, while Frankie and Annette were having innocent fun in the surf, filmmakers figured out that the beach could also be a very scary place if there were a few monsters scattered around. In films like *Where the Boys Are* and *Beach Blanket Bingo*, the boys chased the girls and the girls chased the boys. BPMMs used the same idea, except that, in their case, a creature chased everybody. And the kids loved it.

The granddaddy of all BPMMs is, of course, Roger Corman's *Monster from the Ocean Floor* (Vidmark Entertainment) of 1954. This is a perfect example of Corman's "no frills" style of filmmaking, but, even after more than thirty years, it is still fun to watch.

Julie is a young American tourist cruising along the Pacific coast of Mexico, and there she meets a fellow named Steve who explores the ocean floor in a pedal-powered minisub. Steve is a marine biologist who really knows his stuff. He is always saying things like: "Did you know that over seventy percent of the earth's surface is covered by water?" or "Think of it. One female cod alone lays over eight million eggs." With lines like that, how can Julie help but fall for him?

In the area, cows, dogs, and even people have been disappearing for some time, and the locals have a legend about a sea devil that comes out of the ocean when the moon is full. Scientific Steve doesn't believe a word of all this, but Julie decides to investigate, and, of course, when she finally runs into the sea devil, it's Steve—now a believer—who has to come to the rescue.

True to the Corman style, the acting and production values are terrible, and the monster—when it

finally shows up—is a cheap rubber octopus with one huge red eye that somehow manages to come up on the beach to hunt for food whenever there isn't anything to its liking in the water. Despite these shortcomings, however, *Monster from the Ocean Floor* is a classic that provided everything filmmakers needed to make countless BPMMs well into the 1980s.

Monster from the Ocean Floor gave birth to a whole school of fifties aquatic horror films like *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* trilogy, *It Came From Beneath the Sea*, and *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, along with BPMM classics like *The Beach Girls and the Monster* and *The Horror of Party Beach*. But, by the end of the sixties, the BPMM had gone the way of hula hoops, poodle skirts, and the Mickey Mouse Club. Apparently, we'd had enough fun in the sun.

Then, in the summer of 1975, when we were all convinced that it was safe to go into the water, Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (MCA) cleared the beaches. If you haven't seen *Jaws* in a few years, it's worth looking at it again, because it is no doubt: the best BPMM ever made. *Jaws* draws on the classic films of the fifties and sixties and, by giving rise to more sequels and copies that you can shake a harpoon at, it also set the tone for the new BPMMs of the seventies and eighties.

It is summer on the island of Amity, and everyone is having fun. But, needless to say, there is a threat lurking in the water. Roy Scheider, as the local cop, is the first to suspect that there is a monstrous great white shark preying on swimmers, but no one will listen to him. The town fathers refuse to close the beaches for fear of losing the tourist trade. Of course, as it turns out, Scheider is right, and he is forced to put together his own crew and go hunting for the killer shark himself.

Jaws has all the elements of the classic BPMM—the vacation setting that is suddenly threatened by a creature that spoils everybody's fun, the guy who knows about the monster but who can't get anyone to believe him, the festival (here, the Fourth of July) that puts everyone in danger, the mandatory oceanographer (in this case, Richard Dreyfuss)



An obligatory squeal-and-splash scene from *Piranha*.

who happens to be an expert on aquatic beasts, et cetera, et cetera. But in Spielberg's hands, these old clichés become the building blocks of a spectacularly frightening adventure film.

At his very best, Spielberg knows how to draw a fine line between tradition and parody. *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, for example, can be seen as a straight-forward adventure film and/or as a take-off on the low-budget serials of the thirties and forties. In the same way, *Jaws* is both a BPMM and a parody of the BPMM. The opening scene of teenagers on the beach is straight out of *Horror at Party Beach*, and the underwater shots that offer a shark's eye view of the swimmers are direct quotations from *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. *Jaws* also owes a lot to the film versions of *Moby Dick* (with Robert Shaw in the role of Captain Ahab), *The Old Man and the Sea*, and other sea-faring classics. Spielberg has fun with these clichés. He doesn't mind parodying the tradition and even his own film—witness the scene in which a kid plays a "Killer Shark" video game.

On the other hand, you don't have to get all these references in order to appreciate *Jaws*. In its own right, it is a terrifying, heart-stopping BPMM, and the final shark hunt—which takes up perhaps the last third of the film—is one of the most exciting sequences ever. Watch it again and see what you think.

And now for the bad news. *Jaws* was such a financial success that there had to be a *Jaws II* (MCA)

in 1978, and, as usual, the sequel does not measure up to the original. Roy Scheider is back, but this time the focus is on Scheider's teenage son and his friends. It's the good old BPMM "teens menaced by monster" routine, but while Spielberg is able to poke fun at this tradition, Jeannot Szwarc, the director of *Jaws II*, offers these clichés with a straight face, as if we've never seen them before. But there is nothing original here. Almost every scene is lifted from Spielberg's film, and the teenage kids are the usual bunch—the nerd, the wise guy, the beauty queen, et cetera. Scheider does a good job as Sheriff Brody, but, in the end, *Jaws II* simply takes itself too seriously to be much fun.

Jaws 3-D (MCA), directed by Joe Alves, has the same problems, despite an extremely talented cast that includes Dennis Quade, Bess Armstrong, and Lou Gossett, Jr., fresh from his Oscar for *An Officer and a Gentleman*. Set in a theme park called "Sea World," this is *Jaws II* all over again, with Sheriff Brody's two sons all grown up and facing yet another great white, this time without dad's help.

Bess Armstrong, the oceanographer of the film, and the staff of "Sea World" capture a great white shark that turns out to be a baby, and soon mama comes to claim her youngster. This is a direct steal from an old British film called *Gorgo*, but Alves pretends that the idea is brand new. In fact, nothing here is very interesting or original. We've seen it all before, even the feeble 3-D effects.

Jaws 3-D was the last of the *Jaws*

movies, but not the last of the new wave of BPMMs. *Tentacles* (Vestron)—one of the first and one of the worst *Jaws* rip-offs—is an Italian/American venture, produced by Ovidio Assonitis and featuring, of all people, Shelley Winters, John Huston, and Henry Fonda, all woefully out of place. Claude Akins (who has been in more "B" horror flicks than anyone except maybe Bradford Dillman) is here too in his perennial cop role, wearing his Sheriff Lobo uniform and trying to figure out why all the fun-loving swimmers on his California beach are disappearing.

It turns out that they are all victims of a giant octopus (get it? jaws = shark and tentacles = octopus), and it falls to 30 Hopkins (the oceanographer) to hunt it down. *Tentacles* follows the *Jaws* formula so blindly that any viewer can predict exactly what will happen a good half hour in advance. The only question I had during the film was: Isn't the octopus a timid, harmless creature? Finally, one of the characters actually asks Hopkins this very question, and the expert on aquatic beasts gives a definitive answer: "Well," he says, "this one isn't!" And that settles that.

At the other end of the BPMM spectrum is *Piranha* (Warner), an excellent film produced by Roger Corman, directed by Joe Dante, and written by John Sayles, who also wrote *Alligator* and wrote and directed *The Brother from Another Planet*. The cast here is a who's who of the monster film—Bradford Dillman (who's been in more "B" horror films than anyone, except maybe John Saxton), Barbara Steele (of many horror classics), Kevin McCarthy (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*), Paul Bartel (director of *Death Race 2000* and *Eating Raoul*), and Dick Miller (*Little Shop of Horrors* and *Buckets of Blood*).

Piranha works as a scary film and builds a lot of excitement, but, in the end, it is pure parody. A new strain of piranha is released accidentally into a river, and soon a school of these little monsters is munching on the local populace. *Piranha* repeats all the themes of the BPMM in strict order—the youngsters-threatened-by-the-monster-theme, the water-festival theme, the refusal-of-the-authorities-to-listen-to-the-hero theme, but the

GRAY PLACE

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to his lower chest, and his arms in up to the elbows. There was a woman standing close to him, maybe a dozen feet away. As I got closer, but not too close, I saw that the man was suddenly starting to move. It was loosening up around him. The woman jumped and I expected her to run away as fast as she could, of course, because when it starts to liquify you never know what direction the effect will move, and you want to get out of there as fast as you can. But this woman didn't behave that way. The man was struggling to get out and the woman actually took a few steps toward him! She was holding out her arms and calling to him.

I stopped and stared. I'd never seen anybody act like that before. He was still struggling, and at last he found a solid place and was getting out, and the woman actually reached forward and helped him out! They staggered off a few feet and then stopped, and they threw their arms around each other and hugged and kissed. They were both crying, standing not ten feet from where he had come out. But they could both have gone in at any second. At last they moved away, walking arm in arm.

I suddenly realized I'd been standing in one position all that time, and I hadn't even been thinking about myself. I moved away as quickly as I dared, away from the liquid place and away from them.

I couldn't believe what I'd just seen. I never saw anybody do such a thing. I've never met anyone here yet I'd have taken the chance to hug and kiss. For that matter, I've never even met anybody again that I'd talked to and then parted from.

I wished there were somebody around that had seen it too, so I'd have someone to talk to about it.

I looked around and I didn't see anyone. I kept walking. I looked overhead. The dull gray sky stretched overhead from horizon to horizon, just as the flat gray surface underfoot stretched from horizon to horizon in ever direction. I don't look at the sky very often; there's nothing up there and I keep my eyes on the surface. The sky is not where the danger is.

I was walking along, slowly, thinking about these things, when I felt the surface go liquid, like mercury, under my right foot. I jumped and twisted but I went the wrong way; I slipped. I went in. I threw my arms up and fell straight, and then it hardened and I stopped. I was in only to a little below the waist and my arms were free, so it wasn't too bad. It's all right. ■

film never stops poking fun at them or at itself. Characters watch fish cartoons and old BPMMs on tv, read *Moby Dick* on the beach, and spout lines like "People eat fish, fish don't eat people." Bartel is particularly good as a storm trooper camp director, but Dick Miller steals the show as a has-been Western movie star turned entrepreneur who is holding the grand opening of his Lost River Lake Resort and, at the same time, trying to hide the fact that his lake is full of deadly fish. Unfortunately for him, his guests are eaten right before the eyes of the local media. As one tv reporter puts it: "Lost River Lake—terror, horror, death. Film at eleven."

Well, for every *Piranha*, it seems there must be a *Piranha II* (Embassy Home Entertainment). Ovidio Assoni-



Annette in Beach Blanket Bingo.

tis, who brought us *Tentacles*, returns with this fiasco that, as a sequel to a rip-off, has very little chance of success. The film is, as one might expect, the same old stuff, except that, unlike the original *Piranha*, *Piranha II* takes itself seriously, despite the fact that its premise is totally ridiculous. These piranha, far from being the simple people-munching variety we know and love, can live out of water and even fly after their victims!?! Enough said.

Blood Beach (Media) came along in 1980, five years after Spielberg started the BPMM revival, and it isn't a bad effort at all. Starring John Saxon (who's been in more "B" movies than anyone except maybe Doug

McClure), the film offers a nice twist on the stock BPMM theme. Here, the monster doesn't live in the ocean; it lives in the sand and pulls people down in the beach. As Saxon's character says: "just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water, you can't get to it."

This little film really has a lot go for it. For example, it has no oceanographers, no beach party festivals to be disrupted by the monster, and the creature itself doesn't look like a guy in a rubber suit. If nothing else, Burt Young's performance as a ridiculously crass and tasteless cop who believes the murders are being committed by the American Nazi Party makes the film worth seeing.

Roger Corman's production of *Humanoids from the Deep* (Warner) brings us full-circle. Directed by Barbara Peters and starring Doug McClure (who's been in more "B" horror films than anyone except maybe Claude Akins), this is a 1950s BPMM, updated for the eighties. It has everything you need to make a BPMM—the oceanographer, the Annual Salmon Festival, the teens on the beach (humanoids always seem to prefer teens as victims), the evil industrialists whose experiments gave birth to the monsters in the first place, and, of course, the monsters themselves, created by Rob Bottin.

The plot is pure Corman. The humanoids, as it turns out, are a rapidly evolving species of primitive fish who have become amphibious and who now are trying to speed up their own evolutionary process by mating with human women. Obviously, the humanoids know no more about how evolution works than Frederick James, author of this ludicrous plot, but, when all is said, it doesn't seem to matter. There is some nastiness here, but there is also a lot of grim fun, particularly when the humanoids invade the local carnival and start chasing the girls. If you liked the old made-for-the-drive-in-crowd BPMMs of the fifties and sixties, you'll probably get a real kick out of this one.

So take a day off from the sun summer and screen some of these BPMMs for yourself. The best of them are worth seeing, and even the worst are fun—because they're the worst. Besides, after you've seen *Jaws* again, you probably won't want to go back in the water anyway. ■